

# **PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FAMILIARITY OF ASSESSMENT ADAPTATION: A CASE STUDY**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa has, alongside developments in international education practices, adopted inclusive education as an approach to achieve the objective of quality education for all. The introduction of an inclusive education system has necessitated an adjustment of all processes within education, including assessment. Assessment adaptation is an integral part of the assessment process within inclusive education, as it serves as a measure to ensure that all learners can display their competencies. Teachers, as the implementors of assessment adaptations, need to be familiar with the practice of assessment adaptation to implement these adaptations in their classrooms. This study explores the familiarity that private primary school teachers have of assessment adaptations.

The study was conducted as an interpretive case study at a private primary school in Cape Town. Ecological systems theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study and was used to contextualise the information collected. Educational assessment theory was used as the conceptual framework for the study. Data was collected via a questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and focus group discussions.

The research findings indicate that teachers expressed a need to obtain knowledge relating to assessment adaptation, particularly practical information, as well as knowledge related to the requirements to implement formal assessment adaptations. Teachers also articulated the need for formalised policies related to assessment adaptation and the necessity of a curriculum that allows for adaptation to be implemented. While teachers generally displayed substantial knowledge of assessment adaptation, it was clear that they doubted their competency to implement these adaptations. This showed that there was a need to reinforce the efficacy of teachers, to clearly articulate the standards against which teachers are measured and the objectives that these teachers need to pursue.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, assessment adaptation, bio-ecological model, educational assessment theory, teachers, familiarity.

## OPSOMMING

Suid Afrika het, inlyn met internasionale verwikkelinge in die onderwys, 'n inklusiewe onderwys stelsel geïmplementeer om kwaliteit onderwys vir almal 'n realiteit te maak. Die implementering van 'n inklusiewe onderwys stelsel het verskeie veranderinge in onderwys genoodsaak, insluitend veranderinge in assesseringspraktyke. Assesseringsaanpassings is 'n noodsaaklike deel van assesseringspraktyke in onderwys, aangesien aanpassings gebruik kan word om te verseker dat alle leerders hulle vaardighede ten toon kan stel. Onderwysers moet bekend wees met assesseringsaanpassings, aangesien hulle verantwoordelik is vir die implementering van dié aanpassings. Hierdie navorsingstuk verken die bekendheid van privaatskool-onderwysers t.o.v. assesseringsaanpassings.

Die studie is onderneem as 'n interpretatiewe gevallestudie wat voltooi is by 'n privaatskool in Kaapstad. Ekologiese sisteemteorie is gebruik as die teoretiese raamwerk vir die studie en as middel om die inligting, soos verkry, binne konteks te plaas. Opvoedkundige assesseringsteorie is gebruik as die konsepsuele raamwerk vir die studie. Inligting is ingesamel d.m.v. 'n vraelys, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud en 'n fokusgroep gesprekke. Die bevindinge van die studie is dat onderwysers aangedui het dat hulle nie die nodige kennis van assesseringsaanpassings het nie. Onderwysers benodig veral praktiese kennis en kennis aangaande die proses om formele assesseringsaanpassings te implementeer. Onderwysers het die noodigheid van formele beleid rakende assesseringsaanpassings beklemtoon asook die noodigheid vir 'n kurrikulum wat die implementering van assesseringsaanpassings ondersteun.

Onderwysers het beduidende kennis van assesseringsaanpassings ten toon gestel, maar het steeds gevoel dat hulle kennis nie voldoende was nie. Hierdie insig beklemtoon dat dit nodig is om onderwysers se waardigheid te beklemtoon. Skole behoort formele riglyne in te stel wat die standarde waarvolgens onderwysers gemeet word aandui en die doelstellings wat onderwysers moet najaag.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Inklusiewe onderwys, assesseringsaanpassings, bio-ekologiese model, opvoedkundige assesseringsteorie, onderwysers, bekendheid.

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## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation* (Mandela, 2014, p. 194).

Education forms an integral part of one's life journey, as it is the starting block of building dreams and careers. Not all children, however, find the education process easy, as both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that affect learning (and barriers to assessment) exclude these children from receiving a quality education (Nel, Nel, & Hugo, 2016, p. 3). When these barriers go undetected or unaddressed, learners are excluded from meaningful education. It is the role of educators and support staff to identify and address obstacles to learning. Addressing these barriers requires effort, skill, and a willingness to address barriers both proactively and reactively. It requires educators to address these barriers to learning in all aspects of teaching with a progressive stance as Nelson Mandela states that "[i]t is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another" (Mandela, 2014, p. 194).

The practice of assessment stands centrally within the practices of effective inclusive education. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), is the national curriculum that guides the use of differentiated learning practices, of which assessment adaptations form an integral part. CAPS state that "[w]ithin a differentiated curriculum, assessment of learners and their learning is integral to the teaching and learning process" (Department of Education, 2011, p. 12). The purpose of assessment is to inform instructional planning and "to evaluate effectiveness of teaching for all learners, to assess learning, to identify learner needs and strengths, and to evaluate learner achievement against predetermined criteria for the purpose of grading and reporting" (Department of Education, 2011, p. 12). These



aims should thus guide the practice of assessment as an integral part of all teaching practices. Emphasis should be placed on assessing progress to inform the next steps to enhance the efficacy of teaching. Traditionally, assessment focused mostly on grading and reporting. However, within an inclusive education curriculum, it is only mentioned as the last intent. It is thus clear that assessment has evolved within the inclusive education framework to ensure that all learners, regardless of their ability, can be assessed fairly. Therefore, it is imperative that assessment must be appropriate to suit the needs of the learners in order to avoid the practice of assessment from becoming a barrier to education in itself.

An effective way to ensure that all learners are assessed at their appropriate level is to implement assessment adaptation, which seeks to remove or, at the very least reduce the effects of barriers to assessment by assessing each learner at their appropriate level (SAOU, 2013, p. 3). Assessment can be adapted through the use of measures or implementing aids that bridge barriers. These adaptations can take on a variety of forms, mirroring the myriad of barriers to assessment that exist (Department of Basic Education, 2016, pp. 17-25). Educators in an inclusive classroom need to have the skills to identify different barriers to learning and assessment and to conceptualise ways in which these barriers can be addressed. Educators must assess a diverse group of learners with varying competencies and implement adaptations for learners who may experience various forms of impairment in the completion of assessment tasks (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Therefore, these educators need to be knowledgeable on a wide variety of barriers to learning (and by implication barriers to assessment); and the impact that these barriers have on assessment and adaptations that can be implemented to ensure that learners are not unfairly disadvantaged by assessment processes. The effective implementation of assessment adaptations, however, requires more than just a skill set or knowledge.

Using an inclusive approach is not about different ways that a teacher needs to outwit the learners, but rather about the frame of mind of the educator and the willingness to implement these measures. The implementation of assessment adaptations requires educators to adopt a new status quo that confronts the habit detailed in Boud and Falchikov (2007) who explain that “we often make assumptions about assessments on the basis of what we have experienced in the past rather than in terms of the new circumstances that confront us” (p. 3). With the implementation of assessment adaptations being considered as crucial to the successful implementation of inclusive education, educators need to be both

knowledgeable on the topic as well as willing to implement the practice in their classrooms during assessments.

It is clear that the implementation of assessment adaptations requires a significant change from the traditional methods and views of assessment, which necessitate various changes in the approaches to assessment. Fullan (1992, p. 26) as cited in Donald, Lazarus, and Moolla, (2018, p.17), states that change is manifested in the derivation of meaning regarding a new concept or idea. This process of change starts with an individual's deriving meaning in their own subjective ways, with a network of meanings being constructed through the interactions between people and systems (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2018, p. 17).

According to the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education is striving to “accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups” (UNESCO, 1994). In South Africa, inclusive education was formally adopted as a policy with the publication of Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001). The document is based on the principals of the constitution that afford equal opportunities and access to all. “It builds on the fundamental human rights as contained in the constitution to promote social justice” (Department of Education, 2005, p. 5). Donohue and Bornman (2014) state that Education White Paper 6 aimed to establish a system where all learners could learn together in the same classroom, with appropriate support provision and adaptations to assist learners that experience barriers to learning (p. 4). The Education White Paper 6 wants to achieve this objective by distancing from the different forms of exclusion and suggests the creation of environments that support and set up additional resources for learners that experience barriers to overcome exclusion (Department of Education, 2001, p.10).

## 1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Inclusive education aims to provide quality education for all, where all learners are educated in a single, adaptable classroom environment that caters towards all learners' needs (Department of Education, 2001). Inclusive education also refers to the inclusion of all learners through different approaches to teaching, adapting the curriculum and adaptations of assessment. Inclusion is an approach that, when implemented correctly, holds various benefits to all stakeholders, most notably to learners. However, the implementation of an inclusive education system requires commitment and a skill set from educators who are responsible for implementation at the classroom level. To implement inclusive education, educators must acquire several new intricate competencies. With all learners being educated in a single classroom, regardless of whether these learners experience barriers to learning, educators need to have extensive knowledge of barriers to learning, their effects and the adaptations that can be used to minimise the effect of such barriers to learning to ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity at success within the classroom.

Failure to implement adaptations effectively means that inclusion is not fully practised. In an inclusive education environment where all learners are educated together, such a failure will imply that the learner still has to adapt to the rigid classroom setting and teaching methodology. Inclusion instead entails a system with a fluid curriculum (and assessment methodology) that can adapt to the needs of each learner. Adaptations need to be implemented in all facets of teaching, but most notably in assessment. Formal and informal assessment tasks should be designed to allow learners to demonstrate what they do know and what they can do, not only expose what they do not know and cannot do" (Nel, Nel, & Hugo, 2016, p. 151).

The motivation for this study was that despite the necessity of assessment adaptations to the success of inclusive education, there have been few published works to document the implementation of adaptations and its implications, especially in a South African context. Venter (2012) notes that "[a]part from research done by Alan and Casey (2005) on assessment concessions for learners with little or no functional speech, [she] could not find any other research conducted on the implementation of adaptive methods of assessment and special concessions in the South African educational system" (p. 10).

In addition, it is noted that Venter's (2012) study, like most published studies relating to topics of inclusive education in South Africa, focused on the application of inclusion in a public-school setting. It appears that the application of and contribution towards inclusion within private schools in South Africa is meagrely documented. This statement is echoed by Gous (2009) who notes that " [s]everal authors (Henning, 1993; Du Toit, 2004; Herman, 2006; Hofmeyr, Dhunpath, Mosang & Lee, 2006; and Hofmeyr & Lee, 2003 & 2008) who have written about the characteristics of independent schooling in South Africa, have omitted to make references to disability or even how many schools cater for children with disabilities" (p. 7). Despite the lack of research on inclusion in private schools, it is theorised that many parents prefer to enrol learners experiencing barriers to learning in these schools, as opposed to public schools. The reason being that it is generally believed that learners in these schools are afforded more attention by educators, due to smaller class sizes, and that resources needed to introduce adaptations in private schools are more readily available. A large portion of private schools employs the services of educational psychologists and various other professionals to form multi-disciplined support groups, who are dedicated to supporting learners at the specific school.

The researcher has worked at various private schools during her teaching career and only recently has she been exposed to formalised assessment adaptations within these schools. Having had conversations with previous colleagues about assessment adaptation, it was clear that many did not understand these adaptations or know about them. Many agreed that they have read about adaptations or recommended adaptations in assessment reports from psychologists, but that the practice of implementing these adaptations practically, and in all subjects, seemed daunting. This sparked an interest in the researcher to investigate this further to reach informed conclusions regarding the familiarity of these private school educators with assessment adaptations.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions, knowledge, understanding and experiences of educators, relating to assessment adaptation, in order to determine the extent to which educators feel comfortable about implementing these practices. This research is rooted in the belief that educators play a critical part in the successful implementation of assessment adaptations and thus inclusive education.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As detailed above, the adoption of inclusive education has required educators to develop new skill sets, which aid their implementation of the approach. As such, these educators need knowledge (both practical and theoretical), confidence and willingness to implement these practices actively in their classrooms. Assessment, and assessment adaptations, are an integral part of the implementation of an inclusive methodology. As such, educators need to have adequate knowledge of barriers to learning and the adaptations needed to compensate for or eliminate these barriers. Educators also need practical knowledge on how to identify these barriers and how to implement adaptations, confidence in their abilities to do so successfully, and have a positive attitude towards these practices to ensure that they have sufficient motivation to do so.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES**

**This study aimed to answer the following main question:**

What familiarity do teachers in a private primary school have of assessment adaptation?

**The research question was answered by exploring the following themes:**

- Defining assessment adaptation.
- Role players in the implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teachers' knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teachers' attitudes toward assessment adaptation.

**In doing so, the study attempted to fulfil the following objectives:**

- To establish how teachers at a private primary school understand and define assessment adaptations.
- To establish teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of their ability to implement assessment adaptations in their classrooms.
- The knowledge gained during the study will be used in drafting a policy on assessment adaptation for the school at which the research is to be conducted.

## **1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) explain that paradigms are ways of looking at the world and forming an understanding of the world and what we know of it (p. 8). This research was conducted by using an interpretive paradigm. Cohen et al. (2018) explain that this paradigm investigates the way that individuals view the world around them (p. 20). They further add that the paradigm aims to uncover the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals through their eyes, as opposed to approaches where the researcher takes the role of an outsider (p. 20). In this research, the derivation of meaning and defining who derives such meaning is critical as truth lies in the interpretation and lived experiences of people, in the interactions of people with each other and with the environment. This study thus aimed to define the experiences of teachers, in order to gain an understanding of assessment adaptations from their perspective. As such, the truth is fluid and subject to change. It must be noted that truths uncovered in research using the interpretive paradigm is unique to the specific time and context but may contain principles that can be applied universally. The interpretive paradigm was unpacked and discussed further in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Consistent with this system-based approach, the study was conducted while considering the implications of Educational Assessment Theory. The theory of assessment has evolved gradually toward a more integrative and inclusive approach. Ghaicha (2016) notes that the focus of the literature on assessment moved from a back-to-basics approach in the 1970s to minimum competency movements in the '80s to a minimum standard of competency approach in the '90s and finally to the introduction of alternative modes of assessment (p. 216). In line with this, there has been a progressive movement firstly from an approach of “assessment of learning” toward “assessment for learning” (Gipps, 2012, p. vii), which also entails a shift in focus from summative toward formative assessment practices. Within these paradigm shifts, the practice of assessment adaptation increasingly came to the fore as an integral approach to ensure that all learners are afforded an equal opportunity to display their true competencies.

## 1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was used to contextualise the study. This model defines phenomena in terms of the interactions of the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystem. Donald, Lazarus and Moolla (2018) state that Bronfenbrenner has shaped how we view and understand the functioning of systems and levels within these systems (p. 44). Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016) add that the bio-ecological model "enables teachers to understand complex influences, interactions in terms of the learners and all the other systems associated with the learner" (p. 17). Through the use of this model, an explanation of how the practice of assessment adaptation in the classroom can influence the well-being of learners, teachers and other stakeholders within education can be provided. The use of this model also explains how the practice of assessment adaptation is affected by the circumstances in which it is practised. This model was selected as it is regarded as the most appropriate framework from which to view and interpret experiences to gain an in-depth understanding of not only these experiences, but also the effects that these experiences have on other role players. Essentially, this model helped to contextualise the study and to position how the study can add to the body of knowledge in the application of inclusion in education. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016) confirm that "inclusive education focuses on a systems approach, which means that systems in the society need to interact to provide a supportive structure for the learner" (p. 17).

## 1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

As mentioned, an interpretive paradigm was selected to conduct the research at hand. A qualitative case study research design, which falls within the realm of interpretivism was used. According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research focuses on interpretations of reality at a particular time and within a particular setting (p. 4). Therefore, this design suited the purpose of the study. This research design entails the understanding and translating of the meaning that people attach to the world and their experiences in it, with specific reference to assessment adaptations.

Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark and Morales (2007) explain that a qualitative case study is used to study an issue by exploring it through a single case or cases (p. 245). This design enabled the researcher to thoroughly investigate the research question to achieve the

objectives set out for the study. The researcher believes that this research design enabled her to detail the familiarity of teachers with assessment adaptations by detailing the first-hand experiences of teachers. The research design was discussed further in Chapter 3.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative research methodology within an interpretive paradigm was used to achieve the research objectives. This methodology provided insights into the perceptions and experiences of the research participants. A non-probability sample was selected for the study following a purposive approach. This sampling method entails selecting participants that exhibit certain characteristics or fit certain criteria (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 79). The researcher obtained data from teachers at a private primary school in Cape Town that was purposefully selected. These criteria included that the school had to be completely independent, that it had to embrace an inclusive methodology, and that staff members at the school had to display varying levels of formal education and teaching experience.

The school at which the research was conducted was purposefully selected in accordance with criteria that the researcher set out: the school is a private primary school that opened its doors in 2019. The school is completely independent, in that it does not receive any government funding, and does not form part of a franchise group. This allows the school freedom to employ innovative practices in the pursuit of quality teaching. The opportunity to redesign education was embraced with vigour, as the school employs innovative techniques to enhance the learning experience. The school grounds, buildings and furniture were custom designed to ensure the provision of flexible, engaging learning spaces. In addition, the school embraces the use of technology to aid teaching practices. Learning is not constricted to classrooms, as the school encourages teachers to make use of all its facilities, with learners being offered the freedom to complete tasks in the setting of their choice. The school embraces an inclusive methodology, with various learners, who experience barriers, frequenting the school.

Data for the study was collected using several methods. The researcher analysed documents and policies published by the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA) and the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) pertaining to inclusion in general and assessment adaptation in particular. The two bodies are the primary authorities that



dictate rules and conduct about the granting and implementation of formal assessment adaptation in private schools. The school principal was interviewed to verify which standards the school ascribes to in terms of the implementation of assessment adaptations and which policies the school has adopted of inclusion and assessment adaptation. In addition to this analysis, teachers at the school were engaged in two forms of data collection, the first being an electronic-based questionnaire, while the second was a focus group discussion. The same participants were invited to partake in both methods. The questionnaire was conducted on Google Forms, with a copy of the proposed questionnaire submitted for ethical clearance. This questionnaire was used to solicit basic qualitative demographic and background information, while more in-depth information on the experiences of educators was obtained using the focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was informed by the themes that emerge from the questionnaire to delve deeper into the familiarity of participants regarding assessment adaptation.

Data analysis in terms of qualitative studies is not based on set principles or formulae and also does not involve a process separate from the data collection. As such, the process of collection and analysis are intertwined in a back and forth process, where the one informs the other, and the processes take part simultaneously. Therefore, data collected was used to inform the next steps of analysis and additional data collection if required.

Data analysis included processes to reduce and display data to draw conclusions via inductive reasoning. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) divided the processes of data analysis into preparing and organising data, describing and presenting data, analysing data, interpreting data, drawing conclusions, reporting findings, and verifying findings (p. 644). Emerging themes were identified during data analysis and interpretation. The researcher ensured that she remained cognisant of maintaining data integrity at all stages of data analysis while keeping the end goal of ensuring a rich account of the experiences of teachers in focus. The research methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.10 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

The position that the researcher held as a former employee (teacher) of the school where the research was conducted, could raise ethical concerns. As this research entails a qualitative analysis of phenomena, the researcher recognises her role as the primary

instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). While this role recognises that a human being possesses the ideal skills to analyse the formation of meaning and reality, it also recognises that researchers are fallible, being susceptible to biases and external influences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that “[r]ather than trying to eliminate these biases or “subjectivities,” it is important to identify them and monitor them” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). This statement is echoed by Patton (2002) who states that absolute objectivity and impartiality are “impossible to attain and of questionable desirability in the first place since they ignore the intrinsically social nature of and human purposes of research” (Patton, 2002).

As such, the researcher actively engaged in the research process, while retaining an arm’s length relationship. She continuously reflected on her biases and their consequences to ensure that the validity of the research was not compromised. The researcher believes that the contextual information she has gained during her experience of working within the school aided in the evaluation of data and the derivation of rich insights.

## **1.11 CREDIBILITY AND DEPENDABILITY**

There is a responsibility towards the research participants to ensure that the data obtained is presented in a manner that retains integrity. As qualitative research is subject to interpretation and inductive reasoning, the researcher remained cognisant of her discourses and aimed to minimise the effect of such discourses, to ensure that the research can be regarded as a true reflection of the experiences of respondents. The researcher took care to preserve the “soundness of the research in relation to the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the final conclusions” (Noble & Smith, 2015). As qualitative research differs fundamentally from quantitative research in terms of scientific validation, the researcher utilised various techniques to ensure credibility and dependability, including:

- Accounting for personal bias.
- Acknowledging limitations in terms of replication due to sampling methods.
- Thorough recordkeeping and transparent reduction of data.
- Evaluating different perspectives.
- Including rich and thick verbatim.

- Integrating views presented by different authors and measuring research findings against these views.
- Requesting participant validation to ensure that the data presented reflects the views expressed by participants.
- Data triangulation.

Adapted from (Noble & Smith, 2015).

## **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University before commencing with data collection. In addition to the clearance granted by the university, permission was obtained from the governing body as well as the principal of the school at which the research was conducted. The ethical impact was considered at all levels. It was ensured that the study prioritised the “safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of all actual or potential participants” (Stellenbosch University, 2019). Ethical considerations framed and informed the conduct presented at all stages of the research project. The principles that were adhered to, are explained in brief below:

### **1.12.1 Right to self-determination**

Respect was given to the right of research participants to participate in the research project only out of their own free will. As such, all respondents were provided with full disclosure in terms of the extent of the study and the intended use of data before participating in the study. Also, all participants provided written consent before participation and were advised that such consent would not bind them towards participation in the study, but that they retain the right to withdraw such consent at any stage, without being penalised in any way.

### **1.12.2 Right to confidentiality and anonymity**

The identity of all participants remained confidential to ensure that their identities are not disclosed unduly due to any action or negligence on the part of the researcher. As such, the researcher used pseudonyms to disguise the identity of the participants. The researcher did not retain any material deemed to be of risk at disclosing the identities of participants. All data was obtained electronically, with forms being completed anonymously. Any disclosure in terms of demographic details about specific respondents was disclosed with the utmost

discretion to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality were not compromised. All data was encrypted to safeguard against unlawful access and will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

The researcher is cognisant of the limitations of anonymity and confidentiality that arises from the use of a focus group discussion. These limitations originate from the fact that participants disclose their opinions in front of other group members, allowing group members to link responses to specific individuals. The researcher believes the topic being investigated, and the responses sought are not of a sensitive nature. In addition, a focus group discussion allowed the researcher to explore conceptions in a social context, where respondents create meaning within the conversation. Respondents were nonetheless made aware of these limitations before engaging in the focus group discussion. Besides, respondents were implored to respect the views of others and especially the privacy of others. Respondents were reminded that they would themselves carry a burden to preserve both their own anonymity as well as the anonymity of other research participants.

### **1.12.3 Right to privacy and dignity**

The research participants' right to privacy and dignity was respected by minimising intrusion on their lives while ensuring that they were treated with respect. A conscious effort was made to engage respondents professionally, to ensure that the respondents felt valued and appreciated. The presentation of all findings was done in a manner that ensures that no respondent was belittled or adversely affected.

### **1.12.4 The benefit of the research**

Research must be conducted in a manner that ensures that no harm is done in the practice of such research, while at the same time ensuring that a degree of beneficence can be attributed to the execution of the study. The research project should benefit the respondents as well as the industry, contributing to the body of knowledge or informing enhanced practices that could serve to the benefit of the learners as well as the school community.

All contributing factors have been considered which leads to the conclusion that the research can be classified as low risk. The principles as set out by the Departmental Ethics and Screening committee guideline of 2012, define low-risk research as research:

- “In which the investigation of largely uncontroversial topics is undertaken through interviews, questionnaires, and observation.
- The participants are adults and not considered to be a vulnerable research population.
- The research will collect information that would generally be regarded as non-sensitive, such as opinion rather than personal information.
- The information can generally be collected anonymously” (p. 1).

Regardless of the low-risk classification of the research, it was ensured that all necessary steps were conducted to confirm integrity. As such, all engagements were conducted only after proper consent had been obtained from participants. Daniels (2008) guides the researcher by explaining that the role of the researcher entails to “provide a description of the purpose, value, methods, and effects of the research. [The researcher] also sets out the potential benefits and/or risks to participation for the participant, and the right to refuse to participate” (p. 124).

Privacy was maintained throughout the research process, to minimise the chances of participants’ identities being compromised unnecessarily. The construct of a focus group discussion entails that participants can compromise each other’s identities and the risks associated with participants. All reporting on information gathered was done anonymously using pseudonyms. The researcher collected minimal demographic information on participants. This was done to contextualise the views of participants as a function of their expertise and experience.

### **1.13 RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

The research was organised into five chapters, with numerous subdivisions under each chapter. Chapter one provides a broad introduction to contextualise the study, inclusive education in general and the impact of assessment adaptations in terms of inclusive education practices. The chapter defines terms that are pertinent to the study. The aims and objectives of the study are presented to detail the benefit that can be attributed to the study, while ethical considerations are explored.

Chapter two comprises an intensive literature review which will serve to describe paradigms that will be used to interpret data, discourses that have been identified in relevant related research projects and published material, as well as understandings and conceptualisations of inclusion and assessment adaptation. Insights are provided into the private schooling system in South Africa, the Independent Examination Board that serves as the custodian of examination practices in South African private schools, and documents and policies that frame assessment practices and the implementation of assessment adaptations.

Chapter three will be dedicated to detail the research design and methodology that was used in the research project. Data-collection and data-analysis processes are detailed further, while the researcher motivates the reasons for the preference to utilise the envisioned methods and instruments that were used during the research.

Chapter four was used to detail and present research findings. Insights are provided with findings being presented into the themes that were uncovered during the research, presenting findings in a logically structured manner. A discussion of the relevant findings ensued to detail and provide context into the rich detail that is enrobed in the data.

Chapter five builds on the findings presented in chapter four by interpreting the findings presented and evaluating the implications of these findings. These interpretations were framed considering the strengths and limitations of the study and will inform potential recommendations. Implications that this research project could hold for future research and practices were included.

## **1.14 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS**

### **1.14.1 Assessment**

Reddy, Le Grange, Beets and Lundi (2015) describes the term ‘assessment’ by first looking at its origin. They explain that “the word assessment is derived from the Latin verb, *assidere* which means to sit beside” (p. 17). They further unpack assessment by looking at the etymological meaning of assessment stating that assessment involves true engagement and involvement in activities to gain insights (p. 17). Assessment is, therefore, the process

a teacher uses to gather, observe and to understand what the learner knows and understands in a specific context.

#### **1.14.2 Assessment adaptation**

Venter (2015) defines assessment adaptations as “any alterations to the standard form of assessment, test, examination or conditions relating to the assessment process, which are put in place to enable learners to reflect the knowledge and skills they have gained” (p. 37).

#### **1.14.3 Differentiated assessment**

In CAPS (2011) differentiated assessment is described as the process where “traditional practice of having all learners do the same assessment tasks at the same time “is rethought” (Department of Education, 2011, p. 13). The Department of Education urges teachers in this document to rethink assessment methods so that it is accommodating and flexible to a diverse classroom setting.

#### **1.14.4 Alternative assessment**

Reddy et al. (2015) explain that alternative assessment “provide[s] a mechanism for learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and for other learners who experience barriers to learning who may need alternative ways in which to demonstrate whether they have attained knowledge, concepts and skills” (p. 69). They further explain that there are three kinds of alternative assessment, with the first being “[a]lternative assessment based on alternate attainment of knowledge” (Reddy, le Grange, Beets, & Lundie, 2015, p. 70). In this type of alternative assessment, assessment is adapted for learners who have severe cognitive impairments. Assessments are based on the same principles as all other learners, however, work is assessed with “reduced depth, breadth and complexity” (Reddy, le Grange, Beets, & Lundie, 2015, p. 70). The second kind of alternative assessment they describe is “alternative assessment based on modified attainment of knowledge” (Reddy, le Grange, Beets, & Lundie, 2015, p. 70). This type of assessment is for learners who may require more time and assistance during assessment. Lastly, they explain “alternative assessment based on grade-level attainment of knowledge” (Reddy, le Grange, Beets, & Lundie, 2015, p. 70). Alternative assessment here is the adaption of assessment format and procedures to ensure that equal assessment takes

place. This type of assessment is usually for learners who experience barriers to learning. For the purpose of this thesis, the third type of alternative assessment is referred to. In the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, it is written that “[a]ssessment cannot be a narrow, paper-and-pencil, limited way of looking at children. Assessment means coming to know children well and, based on that understanding, inviting them in” (Department of Education, 2010).

#### **1.14.5 Assessment concessions**

Where assessment adaptations focus on the removal of barriers to enable a level playing field for learners affected by such barriers, the practice of assessment concessions focuses on the removal of requirements of assessment in certain subject areas. This is done after extensive consideration and consultation, with concessions focused on subjects in which impairments surface.

#### **1.14.6 Special concessions**

Special concessions are the measures implemented in the process of assessment adaptation. As such, these concessions are tools or measures that aid the receivers of such special concessions in the completion of assessment tasks.

#### **1.14.7 Barriers to learning**

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning document distinguishes between three types of barriers to learning namely, “intrinsic barriers, systemic barriers and societal barriers” (Department of Education, 2010, p. 16). The intrinsic barriers refer to physical or cognitive barriers within the child. Systemic barriers are caused by school circumstances such as limited resources, inadequate teaching methodology and limited space in classrooms. The last type of barrier refers to external factors such as hardship, illnesses, and cruelty towards a child. In the guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, it is stated that barriers to learning “[r]efer to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevents access to learning and development for learners” (Department of Education, 2010, p. 49).



#### **1.14.8 Barriers to assessment**

Venter (2015) explains, using a Department of Education document that barriers to assessment can be “defined as any circumstance, disability or specific learning difficulty, which prevents a learner from fair opportunity to access assessment” (p. 36). Venter (2015) further adds that learners who experience barriers to assessment are usually learners that have barriers to learning including cognitive and physical impairment (p. 36). Venter (2015) describes barriers to assessment as “any disability, condition or circumstance that prevents a learner demonstrating his knowledge or skills effectively during assessment, particularly during tests or examinations” (p. 37).

#### **1.14.9 Familiarity**

The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines familiarity as a close acquaintance or association with something while adding that familiarity could imply an intimacy with an object or concept (Oxford University Press, 2019). This term is used, as the successful implementation of assessment adaptations involve more than a mere understanding or knowledge of the concept. Educators need to embody the practice and believe in its benefits as well as their own abilities to implement these practices successfully.

### **1.15 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduced the reader to the concepts of inclusion and assessment adaptations and contextualised the role of these concepts and their interplay within the private primary school system in South Africa. The positive impact of an inclusive education system in terms of ensuring that quality education is provided to all is well documented and was explored further in subsequent chapters. The role of the educator in terms of the implementation of an inclusive education system and the practice of differentiation in teaching practices was well defined. In addition, the chapter introduced the theoretical framework that served as the lens through which data analysis and interpretation were conducted as well as the methodologies that were used to collect, analyse, and present such data. The chapter detailed the benefit associated with conducting the research project, detailing the barriers that the research aimed to investigate, as well as how the research is presented to aid in addressing these barriers.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to present the conceptual framework of Educational Assessment Theory. This will allow the researcher to delve deeper into the concepts that have previously been explored in Chapter 1. During the literature review, key concepts are unpacked to set the tone for the research. The Royal Literary Fund (2019) defines a literature review as “a search and evaluation of the available literature in [a] given subject or chosen topic” (p. 1). Throughout Chapter 1, concepts that are relevant to the study were introduced. In Chapter 2 these concepts will be expanded to appropriately frame the study. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature to answer the research question. This literature review will provide insights from other authors which will enable the researcher to present a conceptual framework that will elucidate the topic under research to answer the following research question: **What familiarity do private primary school teachers have of assessment adaptations?**

The rationale for finding answers to the research question lies in the fact that “[s]tudents attending schools today are a much more diverse group than in the past” (Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2013, p. 3). This places an emphasis on the implementation of assessment adaptations within an inclusive education system, as “[c]urriculum adaptations must become an integral part of daily teaching if each student’s learning or behaviour needs are to be addressed effectively at the classroom level” (Hoover & Patton, 2005, p. 8). Despite this, it is noted that few published studies have explored the attitudes and experiences of teachers relating to assessment adaptations (Elliott & Marquart, 2004).

The literature review allows the researcher to explore the views of different authors on concepts that are pertinent to this study. All these concepts will be unravelled by using a funnel approach, moving from global/broad concepts/theories towards narrow details on the application of assessment adaptation.

The literature review will be guided by the bio-ecological model as a theoretical framework and assessment theory as a conceptual framework. These frameworks can be described as the lens through which concepts of inclusive education can be viewed and this will be explored first. The development of an inclusive education system in South Africa, and particularly in private schools in South Africa, will also be deliberated on. After this, the position of the role and practice of assessment within an inclusive context will be discussed. This will be followed by an emphasis on the practice of assessment adaptation as a part of inclusive assessment practices. Lastly, the focus will be cast on the role of teachers in applying these assessment adaptations.

## **2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

Inclusive education has been adopted in a variety of forms globally to ensure access to education for all. Various countries employ inclusion to varying degrees, while little consensus exists on a general definition of inclusion (Nel, 2018). Swart and Pettipher (2019) state that inclusion is “complex, multi-dimensional and even controversial” while recommending that an understanding of inclusion requires an understanding of the concept’s theoretical and philosophical framework (p. 3).

Most definitions of inclusive education, however, agree that it has a global agenda that aims to ensure access to education for all. Nel (2018) emphasises that inclusive education does not only entail a philosophy but that it requires conscious actions on the part of stakeholders to develop a definition that focuses on the role that inclusive education fulfils. My interpretation of the definition of inclusive education as detailed by Nel (2018) is as follows:

- “Acknowledge that all children are capable of learning although they may need support.
- Accept that learners have different capabilities and respect that different learning needs are equally valuable.
- Enable the structures, systems, and methodologies used within education to meet the needs of learners.

- Acknowledge and respect differences in children, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV status, etc.
- Be a factor in contextual circumstances outside of the formal schooling system as learning occurs and is influenced by the home, the community and formal and informal modes and structures.
- Change attitudes, behaviours, methodologies, curricula, and environments to meet the needs of all children.
- Maximise the participation of all learners in the curriculum to minimise barriers to learning” (p. 266).

The adoption of inclusive education as a global agenda has its roots in the human rights movement (UNESCO, 1994, p. vii). Globally, there has been a steady movement from the traditional medical model towards social models to define learning barriers that affect learners and the resulting approaches used to address these learning barriers. The medical model positioned impairment and deficiencies within the child and emphasised the need for the child to adapt to the environment in which he/ she is based, where the social model recognises that the presence of an impairment does not constitute a disability and that disabilities are primarily caused by societies, their actions and their conventions (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, pp. 3-5).

Inclusive education has formed part of the agenda of numerous gatherings of the United Nations (UN) and its subsidiaries, including The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank (WB). This has resulted in the approach being incorporated in the education systems of most member countries. Initially, in 1990, the Jomtien Declaration positioned the need to “ensure that the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults are met effectively in all countries” (UNESCO, 1990). This statement laid the foundation for the adoption of the Salamanca Statement in 1994, which formally adopted inclusive education as a policy and recognised the need to eliminate all barriers to learning to ensure the participation of all learners in the classroom (Mahlo, 2016, p. 4). After the Salamanca Statement, there have been various further statements issued by the UN or its subsidiaries that commit to an inclusive education approach in the pursuit of education for all that led to the provision of universal primary education becoming one of eight Millennium Development Goals (WHO,

2000). More recently, the provision of “inclusive and equitable quality education” (UN, 2019, p. 30) was included in the Sustainable Development Goals, showing sustained commitment to the provision of education for all. Where the initial focus of policies in global education was centred on access to education, the focus has since shifted to emphasise that enrolment in education is not enough when the quality of education is lacking (UNESCO, 2000).

In a South African context, the move towards an inclusive education system coincided with the transition towards a democratic government. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016) state that the move towards an inclusive education started formally with the publication of the South African Schools Act in 1996. The authors add that the investigation conducted by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training, and the National Committee on Educational Support Services further reiterated inclusive principles, while the promulgation of the Education White Paper 6 in 2001 formally introduced inclusive education as a policy. White Paper 6 defines inclusive education as “a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners, irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language” (DoE, 2001, p. 16). Inclusive education in South Africa is framed within a human rights culture where a single education system is dedicated to ensuring that all individuals can realise their right to education, regardless of the barriers they face. This system is a “vast shift from the medical model that predominated in the education system prior 1994” (Drake, 2014, p. 212).

When measuring the progress made towards achieving inclusive education in South Africa, it needs to be noted that the initial objective of access to education has been met as “South Africa reported a 99.3% primary education enrolment in 2014” (Dreyer, 2017, p. 1). Despite this, there have been various challenges with the quality of education provided, as schools face various challenges in the form of resource-endowment and the availability of qualified teachers (Mahlo, 2016, p. 9). Nel (2018) reiterates that “the challenges facing the implementation of an inclusive education system in South Africa are vast as classrooms are diverse concerning race, ethnicity, culture, religion [and] language abilities” (p. 263). Besides this, it appears that inclusive education “remains a mystery to teachers, because they are uncertain as to what constitutes an inclusive pedagogy in a country as diverse as this one” (Mahlo, 2016, p. 7). It appears that while policies governing the implementation of

inclusive education are well articulated, the practice of inclusive education seems to be lacking at a micro-system level (within schools).

When considering the challenges faced by the public schooling system, such as overpopulated classrooms and lack of resources and funding, it can be argued that private schools may offer a more suitable environment for the education of learners that experience barriers to learning. The Salamanca Statement also made mention of the role of both public as well as private schools in the implementation of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994, p. 13). It seems though, that the role of private schools in ensuring education for all, is not captured in policies governing the implementation of inclusive education in a local context. Despite this omission, studies have found that private schools employ inclusive practices to provide support and to accommodate diversity (Walton, Nel, Hugo, & Muller, 2009, p. 121). In addition to the lack of policy governing the implementation of inclusion in private schools, there also seems to be limited research dedicated to the practice of inclusion in these schools (Walton et al., 2009; Gous, 2009). All of this is even though “[t]he first schools in South Africa to cater for children with special needs such as deafness, cerebral palsy and intellectual impairment were after all private ventures” (Gous J. , 2009, p. 9). While this may be true, it must be seen in the context of a racially divided system that was evident at the time. This means that these schools embraced inclusion in terms of accommodating children with impairments but still failed to embrace inclusivity in terms of racial equality (Gous J. , 2009, p. 9).

The private school sector in South Africa has been growing rapidly, with the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) (2016) stating that enrolment figures for private schools have more than doubled from 2000 to 2015. McKay, Mafanya, and Horn (2018) attribute the rise in enrolment to several factors, most notably unmet demand, a desire for differentiated education, perceived quality and smaller class sizes (p. 3). Similar to this, it is noted that the demographics of learners attending private schools have shifted drastically. Where private schools in South Africa are traditionally perceived to service white, affluent households, ISASA (2016) notes that 77% of learners attending ISASA schools are now black, while most new private schools being introduced can be regarded as either low- or medium fee schools. While ISASA (2016) does not formally express its adoption of an inclusive education approach, the organisation requires schools that are associated with the organisation to prove that they are committed to creating “a democratic,

non-discriminatory society and a school community based on fairness and diversity” (ISASA, 2016). These schools are also committed to offering individualised education that is customised to the needs of learners, offering the ideal environment to address barriers to learning that learners may face (ISASA, 2016). From these statements, it is apparent that although an inclusive education approach is not formally mentioned in ISASA’s policies, the organisation nonetheless supports the adoption of an inclusive education approach.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3.1 The bio-ecological Model**

Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model was chosen as the theoretical framework to analyse assessment adaptation using a systemic perspective. Mahlo and Condry (2016) explain that the bio-ecological model is particularly relevant to inclusive education as it “emphasises the interaction between an individual’s development and the systems within the general social context of that individual” (p. 14). The applicability of the use of this model to understand inclusive education or phenomena within inclusive education, like assessment, is also reiterated by both Nel et al., (2016) as well as Tlale, Ntshagashe and Chireshe (2016).

The bio-ecological model describes how each action or change in a system will cause further changes to other role players and the environment, as all role players form part of interrelated systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 11). As such, it emphasises the interaction between people, processes, contexts, and time, all of which form part of these interrelated systems. Systems are displayed as spheres around the individual, with the individual placed at the centre of the model. The ordering of the relevant spheres (systems) is determined by the extent to which these systems influence the individual, and to which extent the individual can influence the system (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 11). The concept of time is also included in the model as “[i]t is only through appreciating the continuous, dynamic interaction between these multiple contextual influences that we can understand why things are as they are at any stage of development” (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2018, p. 47). For this research, this model allows the focus to be on the teacher (individual). Furthermore, it helps one to understand how both the environment that these teachers operate in as well as the people that they interact with, shape their familiarity with assessment adaptations. Additionally, the model allows the researcher to determine whether the familiarity that teachers have of assessment adaptations influences and is

influenced by the education system, as “[t]hings that happen in one part of the system can affect other parts, and ultimately the ecological system as a whole” (Donald et al., 2018, p. 41).

### 2.3.2 Educational Assessment Theory

Assessment theory has evolved in line with developments in education, as there should be an alignment between teaching practices, the understanding of learning and the assessment of learning (James, 2006, p. 47). Resultantly, the move towards inclusive education has shifted theory and practice within assessment. The most notable shift in assessment has been a shift in focus from summative to formative assessment.

Taras (2012) states that where summative assessment entails a measurement against set criteria, norms and standards, formative assessment takes a more fluid approach (p. 2). She adds that where “summative assessment can be described as an *assessment of learning*, formative assessment entails *assessment for learning*” (Taras, 2012, p. 2). This is as formative assessment includes feedback mechanisms which mean that assessment is not only informed by learning but that learning should also subsequently be informed by assessment. In the diagram below Ghaicha (2016) explains which actions in education are informed by assessment.



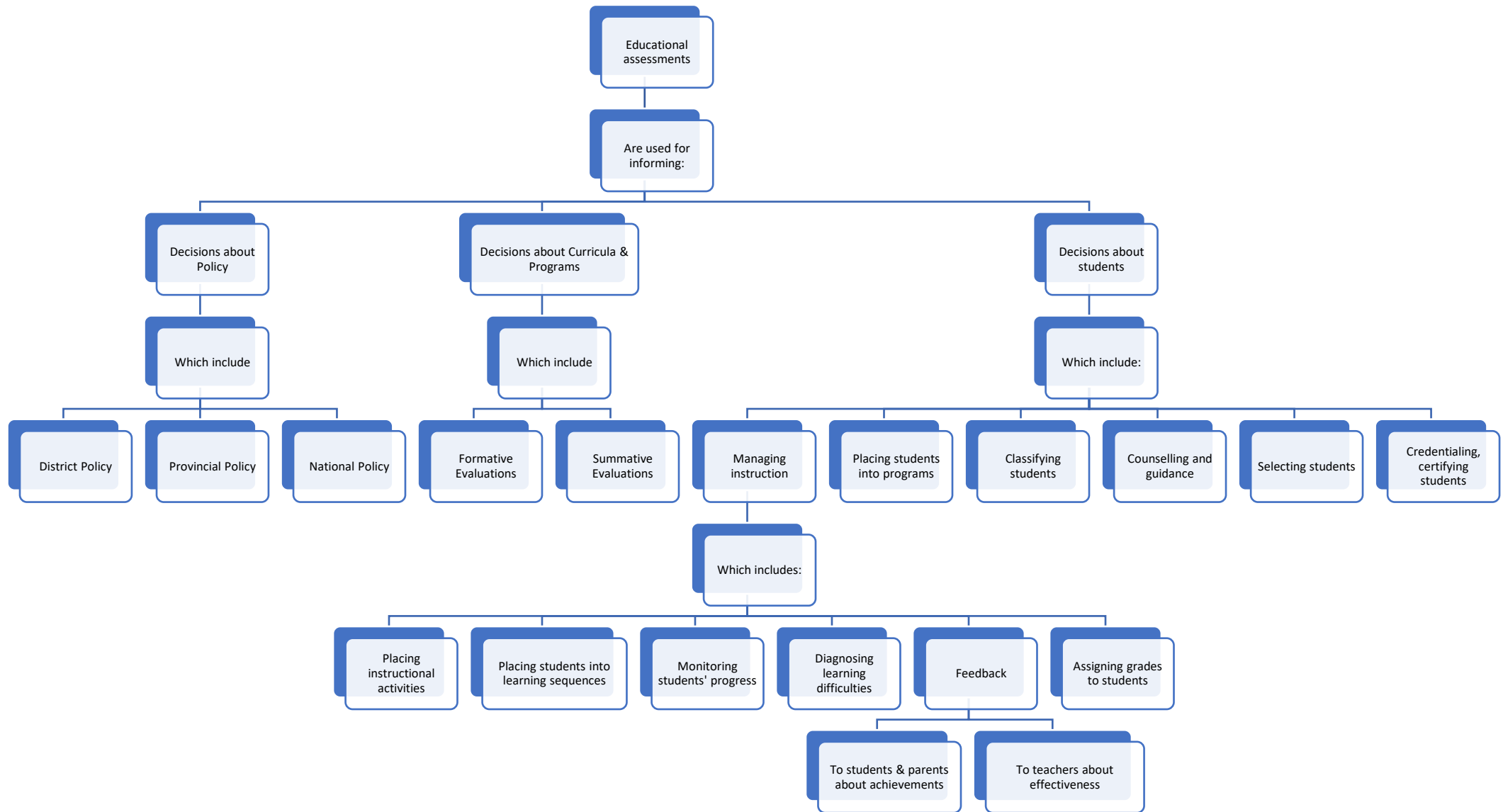


Figure 2.1 Actions in education that are informed by assessment adapted from (Ghaicha, 2016, p.215).

James (2006) emphasises that, as assessment is informed by theories of learning, it should ultimately be framed by the epistemology and ontology of these learning theories (pp. 9-10). She adds that assessment seems to be framed by three predominant theories, being the behavioural, constructivist and socio-cultural theories but emphasises that these theories are not normally applied in isolation (James, 2006, p. 10). This is ascribed to teachers showing little interest in theoretical knowledge, rather than seeking a practical approach to select assessment theories and practices that align with the task or knowledge they want to assess. As a result, teachers can often incorporate different theories of learning into a single assessment task to assess different aspects of learning. As a result of this, various views have been expressed to state that assessment for learning is void of theoretical foundations while being a mere informal extension of formative assessment (Taras, 2012, p. 6). This view is refuted by James (2006) as she states that teachers are not ‘theory purists’ while adding that teachers merely use an eclectic approach by combining different theories (which overlap to a substantial extent) in pursuing their goal of effective assessment (p. 12). Leading from this, there is thus no unified theory of assessment. This, however, does not mean that assessment theories are not grounded in a theory of learning or a combination of theories.

While the adaptive nature of formative assessment is well known and articulated (Taras, 2012, p. 11), adaptation in summative assessment is not necessarily. This is as summative assessment focuses on standardisation to ensure validity. In this research project, the theory that will be applied is that both formative, as well as summative assessment, fulfil the same functions (as detailed in Figure 2.1 above) and as such the same or similar processes and theories should underlie both types as assessment (Taras, 2012, p. 4). As a result, assessment adaptations should be implemented in both formal as well as informal, and formative as well as summative assessment.

## **2.4 ASSESSMENT WITHIN AN INCLUSIVE CONTEXT**

Assessment is a complex concept, that is broader than mere testing, as emphasised by Salvia et al. (2013, pg. 12). “The term assessment generally refers to ‘the ways teachers and other people involved in a pupil’s education systematically collect and then use information about the pupil’s level of achievement and/or development in different areas of their education experience’” (Kefallinou & Donnelly, 2016 in Molosiwa & Monyatsi, 2016, p. 272).

The shift from a deficit medical model approach towards an inclusive approach has necessitated a review of assessment practices. Assessment under the medical model served primarily as a tool to compare the performance of individual learners against one another and to identify deficiencies. The focus of assessment is often limited to mere testing, where “[t]he emphasis on passing or failing permeates daily interactions in the classroom” (Donald et al., 2018, p. 117). In this model of education, summative assessment is overemphasised at the expense of formative assessment.

Where assessment merely served to identify deficits within the medical model, inclusive education emphasises a positive approach, assessment also aims to identify skills, best practices, and areas of efficacy (Salvia et al., 2013, pp. 4-5). According to Nel (2015) “[a]ssessment is something done with and for learners and not to learners” (p.6). Nel (2015) adds that the impact of assessment should be a positive experience for learners, not one that makes them feel incapable or embarrassed (p. 6). Walton (2017) agrees with this by stating that “assessment tasks should be designed to allow learners to demonstrate what they do know and what they can do, not only expose what they do not know and cannot do” (p. 151). Therefore, assessment can become an integral part of the learning and teaching process (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2018, p.163; Nel, 2015, p.1), where it can be used to inform learning instead of only being informed by learning (Donald et al., 2018, p. 117). As such, assessment needs to form part of the curriculum and not only be conducted as a task to monitor progress. Donald et al., (2018) reiterate this by stating that “[t]he curriculum includes how the programme is structured, the process and methods of teaching, methods of assessment and evaluation” (p. 19). However, it is important that assessment does not stand alone but forms part of the content that is taught in classrooms (Donald et al., 2018, p. 163). Inclusive education advocates for formative assessment to play a dominant role (Donald et al., 2018, p. 118). The use of summative assessment also remains relevant, but the purpose of its use changed.

The practice of assessment is regarded as integral to the success of inclusive education, with policies on inclusive education emphasising that incorrect assessment methods can create barriers to learning (Donald et al., 2018, p. 23). Molosiwa and Monyatsi (2016) explain the role of assessment through an African lens. They state that assessment “is an intricate and complex task to conceptualize, especially in the African school context during

an era of civil education reforms” (p. 266). They further explain that in the past, assessment in an African context was merely seen as a time when standardised testing was done. These tests did not take the African norms, culture or language into account and therefore presented a skewed view of the abilities of the learners. They advocate that tests conducted in Africa need to be adapted to the circumstances of the learners that write them (Molosiwa & Monyatsi, 2016, p. 266).

Education policies in South Africa highlight the importance of assessment, with numerous policies containing guidelines for assessment practices. Furthermore, the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoE, 2014) was published to formalise the application of inclusive assessment practices (DoE, 2014). The document provides practical guidance on the implementation of assessment within an inclusive education system. The SIAS (DoE, 2014) policy highlights that assessment must involve numerous stakeholders and serve not only to inform decisions on learner competencies but also practices that can be implemented to support learners (DoE, 2014, p. 5). Motitswe and Taole (2016) explain that inclusive assessment practices should adhere to the following criteria:

- It must account for the level of content to which learners have been exposed.
- Different assessment methods need to be used to accommodate all learners’ needs.
- Assessment practices need to be cognisant of different barriers to learning and aim to address these.
- Assessment must cater for learners displaying different levels of development.
- Assessment must incorporate a focus on different learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) (p. 227).

Molosiwa and Monyatsi (2016) assert that assessment is inclusive when it includes all learners, “ensuring that they all take part in the assessment procedures and that the learning activities planned as a result are appropriate to each individual” (p. 272). Venter (2015) reiterates this by stating that assessment should ensure that all learners are given “a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge” (p. 38). Learners thus need to be active participants, instead of passive recipients of assessment.

With the ultimate aim of inclusive education being to include all learners, it is important to realise that not all content is approachable to all learners, especially learners that experience barriers to learning. Therefore, curriculum differentiation and differentiated

instruction play a vital role in the classroom. Gartin, Murdick, Imbeau and Perner (2002) as cited in Hoover and Patton (2005) explain that differentiated instruction involves “using strategies that address student strengths, interests, skills and readiness in flexible learning environments” (p. 8). When curriculum and instructions are differentiated, it creates a space for all learners to be part of the classroom discussions. It is, however, emphasised that curriculum differentiation also includes the adaptation of assessment practices and strategies as “assessment is an integral part of the teaching process” (SAOU, 2013, p. 3).

Salvia et al., (2013) explain that assessment involves more than the practice of teachers administering tests on learners while adding that “[a] test is only one of several assessment techniques or procedures for gathering information” (p. 5). They believe that an assessment’s purpose is to gather information about the learners’ knowledge, his/her skill set, modifying the learner’s knowledge and then striving to enrich the learners’ final knowledge of a concept (Salvia et al., 2013, p. 12). Assessments, therefore, help teachers to understand whether a learner needs more support in an area or where instructions could be modified to suit the learner’s needs. Consequently, the practice of assessment needs to be assessed itself. This assessment can be used to inform changes to future assessment practices. Assessment can thus be adapted, in the same way as curriculum and instruction, with the aim of removing barriers to assessment that learners may experience. Various terms were used to explain the adaption of assessment in the literature consulted, including “assessment accommodation, concession, alternate assessment or assessment modification” (DoE, 2014). In this thesis, the term assessment adaptation will be used.

A policy drafted by the Western Cape Education Department (2018) refers to ‘accommodation’ as “necessary and appropriate modification of, and adjustment to, the environment, assessment format and/or curriculum format” (Anderson, Barkhuizen, Bothma, & Nel, 2018, p. 2). They further state that “the use of assistive devices and technology, where needed in a particular case, to allow learners with disabilities or those who experience specific learning barriers to learning, access the curriculum and the possibility to show what they know and can do on an equal basis with others” (p. 2). ‘Adaptions’ are described as “alteration of the curriculum and/or assessment tasks for individual learners who experience specific barriers to learning” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 3). The authors define alternate assessment as “measures of performance through an

assessment task which is modified and/or specifically designed for learners who experience specific barriers to learning” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 3). Anderson et al, (2018) explain that concessions are permissions that learners who experience barriers to learning receive “to be exempted from certain subjects or sections of the curriculum content” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 3). They define differentiated assessment as an assessment that is altered from the standard assessment. Differentiated assessment includes adaptations and accommodations (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 3).

## **2.5 ASSESSMENT ADAPTATION**

### **2.5.1 Background to assessment adaptation**

Inclusive education advocates for all learners to be included in one mainstream classroom, consequently, the curriculum and instructions that are given, need to be adapted to include all learners. Donald et al., (2018) explain that since learners “differ in terms of ability, pace and style of learning, flexibility in teaching is essential if the diversity of learning needs in a class is to be accommodated” (p. 19). To adapt the curriculum and instruction to accommodate all learners, Nel, Nel, and Lebeloane (2017) explain that accommodations are necessary. These accommodations “are different approaches to teaching, assessment or testing” (p.78). Differentiation within the classroom cannot just happen on its own, it needs to be planned thoroughly and executed with purpose. Curriculum, instructions, teaching methods, as well as assessment adaptations, need to be understood and correctly implemented by the teachers in order for inclusion to be successful in the classroom (Nel et al., 2016, p. 9). Nel et al., (2017) emphasise that adaptations can only be implemented after learners’ learning styles have been identified to ensure that these adaptations are suitable (p.77). This is confirmed by Motitswe and Taole (2016), who adds that “teachers need to find out what kind of support a particular learner may require and how the attainment of learning outcomes will be accounted for in the assessment procedures” (p. 226). The Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning articulate that “[l]earners are given different options in presenting their work so that every child is assessed in terms of his or her strengths” (DoE, 2010, p. 10).

### **2.5.2 Defining assessment adaptation**

This section will focus on defining assessment adaptation and the factors that influence it, while the role of teachers pertaining to assessment adaptations will be defined in the next section. While the teacher's role in assessment adaptation is integral, various other factors also play a role in the successful implementation thereof. One of these factors that make assessment adaptation complex is the lack of or limited resources (Molosiwa & Monyatsi, 2016, p. 272). Elliott and Marquart (2004) add that a learner's self-efficacy could also have a role in the success of assessment adaptation. They state that it is "critical to understand the way students perceive the use of accommodations in order to gauge the impact accommodations have on student self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 352).

Assessment adaptation in itself means to adapt the assessment. The assessment needs to be adapted to include various learners that might experience barriers to learning. The SIAS (DoE, 2014) document plays a vital role in the process of attaining assessment adaptations. This policy has various forms to guide the teacher to implement support for a learner (DoE, 2014, pp. 49-65). In a private school, the path to assessment accommodation is implemented differently and for this thesis, this will be explained. "Unlike state schools which are bound by Departmental policy, independent schools enjoy relative freedom and are well placed to respond innovatively to the challenges of inclusive education" (Walton et al., 2009, p. 110). If a teacher identifies that a learner might need extra support, the teacher needs to adapt to the curriculum and instruction methods. Most private schools have an on-site learning support teacher that will guide the class teacher as to how to make the necessary adjustments. If more support is required, the learner will visit the learning support teacher weekly. If the learning support teacher feels that more support is needed, the class teacher and parents are called in for a meeting and a scholastic evaluation is requested. The psychometrist or educational psychologist that does the scholastic evaluation then writes recommendations that are in the best interest of the learner and will give a detailed description of what the learner needs with regards to assessment adaptations. The same process ought to apply in public schools when the SIAS (DoE, 2014) process is followed and resources are available. "For the students with disabilities who participate in assessments with accommodations, information is needed regarding which accommodations are valid – that is, which accommodations maintain the integrity of students' test results so that meaningful comparisons can be made between

their scores” (Elliott & Marquart, 2004, p. 350). According to the Department of Education (2008), the rationale for the use of alternative assessment is as follows:

- “To ensure educational accountability to the learner, his family, his school and the relevant educational authority.
- To gather information that can be used to motivate for appropriate resources and funding.
- The aim is to establish the nature and extent of support needed and then to plan the provision of and access to such support” (Bornman & Rose, 2017, p. 49).

These accommodations of assessments are mere modifications to the way the assessment is undertaken or asked. Byrnes (2000) as cited in Nel et al., (2017), states that “an accommodation should not alter the essential purpose of the assignment” (p. 77). The authors add that “[t]asks should not be made easier, only possible because learners are still expected to demonstrate their knowledge and skills” (p. 77). Walton et al, (2009) are advocates of assessment adaptations as they explain that assessments are the area of the curriculum where teachers can use adaptations most easily and that these adaptations have the most significant impact on learners who experience barriers to learning. They explain that “[m]odifications may be made in the way the learner performs a task, like having a teacher read to the learner, or allowing oral response” (Walton et al., 2009, p. 109). Molosiwa and Monyatsi (2016) divide assessment adaptations into two categories namely, assessment adaptations that do not change “the programme or curriculum content, expectations, standards or test” (p. 272), which they term as accommodations. The second category which, is labelled as modification, occurs when accommodations are made to change the “content, expectations, standards and tests” (Molosiwa & Monyatsi, 2016, p. 272).

An alternative viewpoint on assessment adaptation by Reid (2013), is that each assessment opportunity is seen as a learning curve. He states that five factors can enhance learning through assessment which is “effective feedback, active involvement of students in their own learning, adjusting teaching, recognition of the influence assessment has on motivation and self-esteem and the need for students to be able to self-assess and understand how to develop their own learning” (p. 36). The principle that assessment should lead to learnings is articulated in the SIAS (DoE, 2014) document, where the process of assessment is depicted as a cycle (DoE, 2014). This process, as portrayed by Dreyer (2015, p. 28) in figure 2.2 below emphasises that learnings gained during



assessment must lead to actions that aim to improve the learning process. Gathering these factors after each assessment allows the teacher to reflect on the learning that has taken place. It also allows the teacher to decide which support structures need to be put in place for individual learners to optimise their learning and ability to remember the information in a test situation. This gives the teacher an idea of which learners require the curriculum and instruction to be modified.

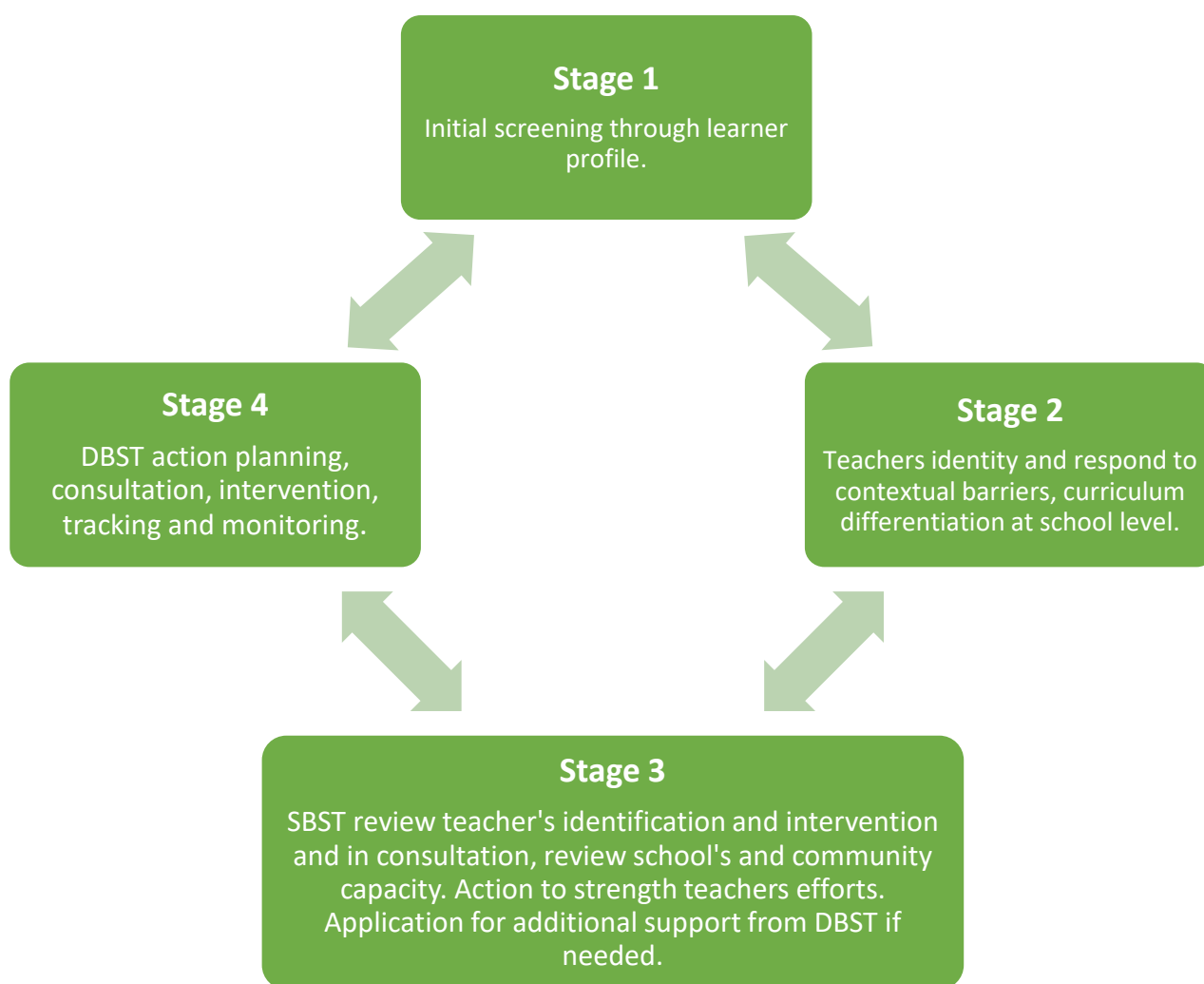


Figure 2.2 The SIAS process (Dreyer, 2015, p. 28).

### 2.5.3 Types of assessment adaptation

Venter (2015) briefly explains that assessment adaptation can be divided into four groups namely “timing/scheduling adaptations, the presentation format, response format and setting adaptations” (p. 63). It is important to note that with assessment adaptations there is no one size fits all. Each case is separately investigated by a professional before the

adequate adaptation is recommended. Not all learners that experience barriers to learning or have a physical disability need to make use of adaptations. Some learners will need one or two adaptations and other learners might not require adaptations at all.

Various authors write about the different types of assessment adaptations that are available. The following section will combine the details of these works. As a starting point, several authors recommend general principles to which tests need to adhere. Westwood (2013) writes that “written instructions on test sheets [should be] brief and simple” (p. 68). There ought to be enough space after questions so that learners can easily write their answers (p.68). The kinds of questions should also be ranged (p.68). Doubet and Hockett (2015) also suggest that the type of questions asked should be varied, including word banks, fill in the blanks, fit column a to column b, multichoice and crossword puzzles (p. 210). Westwood (2013) writes that learners should be encouraged “to add drawings or diagrams in their answers” (p. 68). He also suggests that learners should be allowed to explain what they do know about the topic that is asked which can be done by including questions in the assessment that asks this. Westwood (2013) recommends that one should “[a]void using test examples that are highly culture-specific” (p. 68). Bornmann and Rose (2016) explain that learners should be allowed to “use shortened tests so that they do not have to write long paragraphs that are difficult and full of spelling mistakes” (p.100). They propose that the teacher can provide support in written tasks by looking at a draft first and proofreading before marking the final draft (p. 100).

Bornman and Rose (2017) provide some insightful, creative tips to accommodate learners during an assessment. Their ideas focus on the creative part of a learner and attempt to make assessments enjoyable. They recommend that learners should rather “draw answers than write them” (p. 100). This could include using mind maps, diagrams or drawing cartoons (p.100). Using posters to explain a concept is also a creative way, as it allows learners to display their work differently and allows them to explain the work orally (p.100). Bornman and Rose (2017) suggest that one can use drama and music to give learners the chance to display their knowledge of the content. Learners can write their own drama or song to display the information (p.100).

During my tenure of teaching in a school that promotes the use of technology, I have seen that various technology devices can be used as a vital tool in assessments. By giving the

learner the chance to use a computer, iPad, or tablet to answer assessments, they can, for instance, use the spell checker function to help overcome a spelling barrier. With the use of devices, learners can now create PowerPoint or Keynote presentations to explain their work. There are various applications (apps) that could enable learners to express their knowledge without standing in front of the class or writing it out. On the iPad, apps such as Chatterbox, Plotagon, and Toontastic are great ways to encourage learners to share knowledge about a topic while using ways that are fun and interesting to them.

Venter (2015) differentiates between different assessment adaptations that are offered to learners who experience barriers to learning, listing “additional time, reading to a learner, use of a computer, enlarged print, planning aid, the use of a prompter, rephrasing questions, use of a dictionary, the use of an interpreter, alternative questions, separate venues and amanuenses” (p. 64). The next section will detail the various types of assessment adaptations.

**Additional time** is the adaptation that is the most frequently used. The amount of additional time a learner requires depends on the learner’s specific needs. During an assessment, a teacher “needs to make sure that a learner can execute a task to the fullest of his or her potential, before moving to the next one” (Nel et al., 2017, p. 78). Venter (2015) explains that learners that need more time are learners that struggle to process the test information in the given time frame (p. 64). If a learner’s “physical, sensory or learning difficulties cause a slow working speed” (p.64), they require additional time. “Learners who struggle with concentration [...] need frequent breaks during an assessment [might also] require additional time” (p.64). Additional time could also be required when a learner “[uses] a reader, when doing amanuenses, for papers with large print, when using an interpreter, when papers are read in Braille, and according to any other needs of the learner” (Venter, 2015, p. 65). Table 1 is retrieved from the document *Procedural manual for assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment from Gr. R to 12* (DoBE, 2016). The figure details the amount of additional time that is typically allocated for certain impairments.

Table 2.1: Additional time (DoBE, 2016, p. 17).

Impairment	Additional time
<b>Physical Disability/ Repetitive Strain Injury</b>	5 to 10 minutes per hour to accommodate slower writing speed.
<b>Learning Disability</b>	20 minutes per hour for perusal/ formulating/ writing/ checking answers.
<b>Chronic Pain</b>	15 minutes per hour for standing and/or moving around.
<b>Vision Impairment</b>	Double time for learners who are blind, and time and a half for learners who have low vision.
<b>Hearing loss</b>	20 minutes per hour for perusal formulating/ writing/checking answers.
<b>Any other disability not identified in the above list</b>	May use the above-mentioned time allocation, not exceeding 20 minutes per hour.

**Ad hoc support** or **emergency accommodations** may be required for learners who are pregnant, learners who experience trauma, or learners who need to be hospitalised or imprisoned. It may be required that these learners write the assessment in a separate venue, at a later stage or during another assessment period (DoBE, 2016, p. 24).

The Western Cape Education Department as cited in Venter (2015) explains **alternative questions** in one of their policies. They state that “[i]f questions are inaccessible to a learner due to his disability, alternative questions of the same standard can be substituted” (p. 73). A practical example is given by stating that “for learners with a physical or visual impairment who are unable to draw or sketch in subjects such as Life Science, the sketches can be substituted by questions testing the same concept” (Venter, 2015, p. 73). However, this does not apply to all subjects. Anderson et al., (2018) explain that alternative questions are very useful for learners who are blind, hard-of-hearing/deaf and/or physically disabled (p. 130).

Literature is limited when it comes to describing the use of **dictionaries** as part of an assessment adaptation. Venter (2015) is the only author that suggests the use of dictionaries. Venter (2015) explains that learners who are immigrants are allowed to use dictionaries to assist them during examinations and assessments (p. 72), to investigate the meaning of words or translate words from a language they are used to.

**Enlarged print** is an adaptation for learners that have a visual impairment. This is not only applicable for assessments but for daily work. Venter (2015) refers to a study done by McLeish (2007) that reviewed the impact of providing enlarged print for 14 low vision learners which showed that “increased letter spacing and large print led to increased reading speed” (p. 70). The Department of Education (2016) suggests that “[t]he optician/ophthalmologist should recommend the specific font or screen interface that each individual learner requires” (p. 22).

In the case where a learner is seen as a refugee, immigrant, or a learner with a study permit, they can receive an assessment adaptation for their First Additional Language at school – **exemption of language**. Learners who experience a severe specific learning disorder, deaf learners and learners that are on the Autism Spectrum could also get exemption of a language. Anderson et al, (2018) explain that Grade 1 – 9 learners’ “First Additional Language results should not be considered for promotion purposes” (p. 136) and Grade 10 – 12 learners’ “First Additional Language can be substituted for another subject from Group B” (p. 136).

Venter (2015) explains that learners can achieve a **handwriting** adaptation. This is for learners with “visual impairment, learning difficulties or physical disabilities, and [for] learners suffering from anxiety, ADHD [Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder], autism or behavioural disorders” (p. 73). When a learner has this type of assessment adaptation, there are two ways that the learner can use it. A sticker is placed on the assessment paper to indicate to the marker that the learner has a handwriting adaptation, therefore the marker should not take handwriting into account. The use of computers, and especially iPads or tablets, in the classroom for assessments and test papers has also become increasingly popular in aiding learners with handwriting difficulties (Dunbar-Krige, Venter, Nel, & Mavuso, 2015, p. 69). iPads and tablets/laptops have the function to dictate verbal answers into written ones, making the process of answering questions or completing

assignments for learners with handwriting adaptation an easy task. Learners who have this accommodation could also make use of a scribe, where someone can write down their verbal answers.

In the *Procedural manual for assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment from Gr. R to 12* (DoBE, 2016), it is explained that the role of an **interpreter** for learners that are deaf or hard of hearing is changing. With developments in technology, electronic papers that include videos of an interpreter signing the questions are available. By using webcams, learners can now record their answers using sign language (DoBE, 2016, p. 26). However, not all schools have this in place and still use an interpreter for two reasons: “Hard-of-hearing learners normally write their exams themselves, but are entitled to have interpreters present in the examination venue to interpret words or phrases that are difficult to them” (Venter, 2015, p. 72). Other learners that are completely deaf make use of an interpreter to take on the role of a scribe and write down the answers that the learner signs.

Learners who have medical conditions that require them to take **medication** during their assessment or requires to eat **food** can receive an assessment adaptation. These learners also require a separate venue as well as extra time. This assessment adaptation should only be allowed with the issuance of a medical report (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 137).

The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) (2016) explains that a **prompter** and a **personal assistant** is there to help learners who need help in the basic tasks of an examination or assessment (p.20). Venter (2015) explains the same role as a **planning aid**, however, in her newest work published in 2019, she changed the term to prompter. She explains that learners who experience barriers to learning such as motor apraxia or the inability to plan need a planning aid (p. 70). The role of the personal assistant could include turning the page or giving clarity about a task at hand. It is important to note that a personal assistant may not scribe or read the questions as that is not the purpose of a personal assistant. The prompter’s role is to help a learner to stay focused during a task (DoBE, 2016, p. 20). Venter (2015) gives a detailed description of the role of a planning aid that includes the encouragement of a learner to “complete the question paper, to help the learner relax, to explain the structure of the paper and remind him or her of time

allocation, to remind learners of the mark allocation, as they often tend to give a one-point response, to assist the learner in keeping his or her attention on the task at hand” (p. 71).

Venter (2015) and The Independent Examinations Board (IEB) (2016) uses the term **amanuensis** to describe a scribe. Anderson et al, (2018) and other DoE documents use the term **scribe** and **reader**. Venter (2015) explains these interchangeable terms by stating “[m]ost teachers will be more familiar with the word “scribe”, which is the term mostly used internationally” (p. 75). She further explains that “[i]n South Africa, the term “amanuenses” is used in several circulars and documents” (Venter, 2015, p. 75). The IEB (2016) explains amanuensis as “a person who reads to and scribes for the learner. The entire examination session must be recorded, and a copy of the recording submitted with the answer booklet. A separate venue is required for this accommodation” (p. 4). Anderson et al, (2018) use the information in the *Procedural manual for assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment from Gr. R to 12* (DoBE, 2016) to explain a scribe and a reader. They state that “[a] learner may be granted the use of a reader if there is a significant discrepancy between the learner’s chronological age and reading age. A reader can be a person or the learner can utilise an electronic device such as an MP3 player, as a substitute reader” (p. 140). Computers, tablets, iPads, cell phones, and reader pens now give learners easier access to a reader. Anderson et al., (2018) explain that learners who experience difficulty with “word reading accuracy, reading rate or fluency, reading comprehension, visual impairment which affects the reading ability, reading problems affecting achievement in examinations, for example, eye infections” (p. 141) may qualify for using a reader. The use of a reader may include help with a “slow reading rate, reading difficulties due to problems with decoding and word recognition, poor reading accuracy, poor reading comprehension, dyslexia, visual impairment which affects reading ability” (DoE, 2008, p.122 as cited in Venter 2015, p. 65). It is important to note that when one uses a reader in the classroom, it should not be a disturbance to the rest of the classroom, therefore it is advised during examination times that the learner and reader have separate venues. If a teacher does decide to be the reader during class assessments, it is important that no learner, including the learner that is being read to, is impacted. The use of a scribe is needed when a learner’s writing speed is slow or if a learner’s handwriting is unreadable. The use of a computer can also act as a scribe. Learners who have difficulty in “spelling accuracy, grammar and punctuation accuracy and clarity or organisation of written expression” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 143) benefit from this adaptation.

The assessment adaptation of **rest breaks** is given to learners who are not able to sit during an entire examination. They require the use of a separate venue and an invigilator. “This Assessment Accommodation applies to diagnosed medical and physical conditions that impact on the daily functioning of the learner” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 142). In the *Procedural manual for assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment from Gr. R to 12* (DoBE, 2016), it is explained as a time that a learner gets the opportunity to move away from his/her desk but still stay in the same venue as where the examination is taking place. “Rest break time does not count as extra writing time. The rest break time used will be added to the examination session” (DoBE, 2016, p. 23).

**Rephrasing** is only allowed to be used for learners who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, immigrant learners or learners who are aphasic. Opinions have been expressed that learners who suffer from language barriers, i.e. learners who are not educated in their home language, could also benefit from rephrasing. The application of rephrasing involves simplification of wording when requested by the learner. This is done to make questions more understandable and to define unfamiliar or abstract words. Rephrasing should not change the content or standard of questions and may not include any explanations. Therefore, rephrasing should be limited to the sections or words that learners request clarity on (Venter, 2015, p. 71).

When a learner requires the use of a **separate venue** it is granted in coherence with other adaptations. When a learner needs a scribe, reader, prompter, personal assistant, rephrasing, rest breaks, experiences anxiety or easily gets distracted, a separate venue is granted. However, it is important to note that a separate venue needs to be applied for. A learner who gets a scribe, reader or prompter adaptation does not automatically get a separate venue. Anderson et al, (2018) explain that a separate venue is a “quiet environment away from the main examination centre and must meet the minimum requirements to be approved as an examination venue” (p. 145).

The *Procedural manual for assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment from Gr. R to 12* (DoBE, 2016) explains the **spelling adaptation** as follows: “[t]his accommodation is granted to learners experiencing a Specific Learning Disability, including dyslexia, where there is a significant discrepancy between the chronological age



of the learner and spelling age of the learner, and the learner's ability to express his/her thoughts adequately is thus compromised" (DoBE, 2016, p. 22). If a learner has a spelling adaptation it should be made clear on his/her assessment paper with a sticker. However, in language paper 1 the spelling adaptation does not apply.

The use of **technological devices** in assessment adaptation is becoming much more popular. Technological devices refer to the use of computers/laptops, iPads, tablets, Webcam, and any form of recording/listening device. Venter (2015) explains that this adaptation is given to a learner who has a physical disability or a barrier to handwriting. The barrier to handwriting could include "when answers are illegible to markers or when written work is produced at a below-average speed for his or her age" (Venter, 2015, p. 69). Another purpose the computer serves is to help learners with reading difficulties as they can use headphones to listen to the recorded assessment.

Table 2.2 serves as a summary of all the assessment adaptations discussed above. The assessment adaptations will be put in alphabetical order for easy reference. This table lists all assessment adaptations and the learning barriers that may require these assessment adaptations.

Table 2.2: Types of adaptations for specific learning barriers (adapted from Anderson et al, 2018; Department of Basic Education, 2014; Dunbar-Krige, Venter, Nel, Mavuso, 2015; Independent Examinations Board, 2016).

Type of adaptation	ADHD	Anxiety disorder	Autism	Behaviour disorder	Deaf/ Hard of hearing	Learning difficulty	Limited functional speech	Other medical conditions	Physical barriers	Psychological disorders	Reading disorder	Spelling problem	Visual impairment	Writing disorder
Additional time		♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣
Alternative questions					♣	♣	♣		♣	♣			♣	
Dictionaries					♣									
Enlarged print									♣				♣	

Handwriting	♣	♣	♣	♣		♣	♣	♣	♣				♣	♣
Interpreter					♣				♣					
Medication/ food						♣	♣						♣	
Prompter/Planning aid/ Assistant	♣	♣	♣	♣		♣	♣		♣	♣				♣
Reader		♣				♣	♣		♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	
Rest breaks	♣				♣		♣		♣	♣			♣	
Rephrasing					♣		♣							
Scribe		♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣		♣	♣	♣		♣	♣
Separate venue	♣		♣	♣	♣	♣	♣		♣	♣			♣	
Spelling					♣	♣	♣					♣		
Technological devices			♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣		♣	♣

## 2.6 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN APPLYING ASSESSMENT ADAPTATIONS

As the move towards inclusive education has necessitated a revision of educational policies and practices, it would also cause shifts in the role that teachers fulfil. Makoelle (2016) concurs that this is, in fact, the case, by stating that the impact of inclusion is most notably seen in the pedagogy that teachers employ in their classrooms (p. 57). Inclusion firstly entails that all learners are educated in the same classroom, but secondly that the classroom environment and teaching practices need to be fluid enough to adapt to the needs of individual learners in order to remove barriers to learning (Nel et al., 2017, p. 76). In this study, the focus is placed on methods employed to adjust assessment to ensure that it grants all learners an equal opportunity to display whether they have achieved the desired outcomes.

The SIAS (DoE, 2014) document proposes that teachers are primarily responsible for the implementation of assessment, and by implication, assessment adaptation practices. Mahlo (2016) reaffirms this by stating that “the SIAS (DoE, 2014) procedure requires teachers to have specific knowledge and skills to enable them to identify and help learners who experience barriers to learning in their classes” and add that “all teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach, should be able to identify learners’ level of education and support their learning” (Mahlo, 2016, p. 8). The specific roles that teachers are required to fulfil concerning assessment are documented by Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2008). They explain that teachers have four distinctive assessment roles:

1. To assimilate assessment information – teachers must be able to understand and interpret assessment information.
2. To produce assessment information – they must be able to generate assessment information by administering tests, observing learners, etc.
3. To communicate assessment information – this points to the fact that teachers need to be able to work in a team and share relevant assessment information with these teams.
4. To develop and administer assessment instruments – teachers create assessment techniques and conduct the task of assessment (Smith et al., 2008, p. 121).

The roles explained above show that teachers not only need to be equipped with skills to conduct assessments themselves but also need collaboration skills to participate in multi-disciplinary teams. The benefits and necessity of collaboration in the conducting of inclusive assessment and the application of assessment adaptation are well documented (Walton et al., 2009; Mahlo & Condi, 2016). It is reiterated that “classroom teachers are not expected to have all the answers or undertake the IE task alone” (Mahlo, 2016, p. 9), but that these teachers must have the skill set and willingness to conduct assessment and assessment adaptation either on their own or as part of a team. Teachers need to be able to determine the extent to which learners experience barriers to learning, and dependent on the severity of the impact and the nature of the barriers, determine whether these barriers can be addressed by themselves or whether support needs to be sought. Support should also not be limited to specialist therapists, as the advice and assistance that teachers can offer each other may also prove invaluable. It is reiterated that “curriculum delivery requires a high level of teamwork, joint planning and collaboration amongst teachers” (Mahlo, 2016, p. 9).

The literature that was consulted pointed to three central requirements that need to be in place for teachers to implement assessment adaptation successfully (Swart & Pettipher, 2019; Nel, Nel, & Lebeloane, 2017; Dunbar-Krige, Venter, Nel, & Mavuso, 2015). Firstly, teachers must be empowered and involved in curriculum development and planning. Secondly, they must be knowledgeable and skilful in the application of assessment adaptation and lastly, they need to be willing to implement these adaptations and be confident that they have the ability to do so.

With the interdependence of teaching and assessment in an inclusive education system being established, it is only natural to assume that the content of the curriculum and how it is taught would ultimately influence assessment. However, according to Makoelle and Van der Merwe (2016), the involvement of South African teachers in designing and developing a curriculum is limited, with teachers having little or no say in constructing the curriculum. The DoE has drafted and implemented standardised curricula, in the form of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), to be implemented per grade level, with rigorous practices in place to ensure that all topics and activities are completed (DoBE, 2019). This, in turn, creates an environment where the main onus is to provide proof that the required quantity of work has been completed, leaving little space for adaptation from teachers to adjust their content and practices in order to accommodate for the competencies of their learners (Du Plessies & Marais, 2015, p. 8). It seems, however, that private schools have been able to strike a better balance than their public counterparts. ISASA (2017) notes that private schools need to ensure that their curricula adheres to the aim and scope of CAPS (DoBE, 2019) and maintain a standard of curriculum that is equal or better than public schools, while they are not required to adhere to the sequencing of content, assessment arrangements, recording or reporting requirements of CAPS (ISASA, 2017, p. 21). This creates an environment where curricula, and by implication assessment, can be adapted by teachers at these schools as they are “free to use their own curricula and to organise teaching, learning, and assessment in the school in any way they wish as long as the learners are able to achieve the minimum outcomes and assessment standards” (ISASA, 2017, p. 20). This statement balances between the need to adhere to certain standards and the need to adapt curricula to cater towards the needs of learners or even a specific learner.

The ability to adjust curricula, however, comes with the prerequisite that “teachers must be skilled at developing an inclusive teaching strategy” (Makoelle, 2016, p. 35), which is the next requirement for successful assessment adaptation to be explored. Various authors, (Makoelle, 2016; Walton et al., 2009) reiterated the need for teachers to have adequate knowledge of the practice of inclusive education. The necessity of having competency in assessment practices specifically is reiterated by Salvia et al., (2013), who state that assessment is “a critical component of teaching, and so teachers must have good skills in assessment and a good understanding of assessment information” (p. 12). Hoover and Patton (2004), as cited in Mukwambo and Phasha (2016) differentiate between two types of competencies needed in assessment adaptations, namely development competence and implementation competence (p. 84). Thus, the implementation of assessment entails that teachers need to be able to plan strategies and assessment tasks in advance and implement them in the classroom. Both the planning, as well as the implementation must be informed by the competencies of learners as established in prior activities. It is emphasised that the knowledge required by teachers stretches further than mere theoretical knowledge, as teachers also need to be able to account for environmental and situational factors (Mahlo, 2016, p. 16) in the implementation of assessment adaptation while engaging in a reflective, critical analysis and evaluation (Makoelle & van der Merwe, 2016, p. 23) of their practices. Therefore, teachers need to be able to plan ahead, but also have the flexibility to adapt their pre-planned practices when the need arises to do so.

The last factor that influences the familiarity of teachers with assessment adaptation is their willingness to implement these adaptations, their attitude towards inclusion, and their belief in whether these adaptations add value. While Makoelle (2016) states that teacher attitude towards inclusion is affected by the competencies that teachers have in implementing adaptation, it is reiterated that the correct attitude toward inclusion is a prerequisite for acquiring knowledge on inclusive practices in the first place (Mahlo & Condry, 2016; Mahlo, 2016). It is also noted that attitudes toward inclusion and the practice of inclusive practices are not fixed and that they can be adapted over time. Teachers’ attitudes toward the necessity of inclusive education and by implication assessment adaptation can thus change over time, either by efforts embarked upon by the teacher to do so or by experiences that the teacher comes across that alters his/her preconceptions and beliefs. The qualities that an inclusive teacher requires is summarised by Motitswe and Taole (2016, p.236) who state that a teacher needs to:

- recognise individual differences,
- implement different learning strategies for all,
- have a strong commitment towards her community,
- have a holistic view of education with strong skills and experience,
- have good communication and interpersonal skills,
- be good leaders,
- be able to resolve conflict; and
- have problem-solving skills.

It is apparent that teachers need to actively acquire these qualities to implement assessment adaptation effectively in their classroom, to ensure that all learners are granted an equal opportunity to display their competencies.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter explored existing literature on assessment within an inclusive education system, the practice of assessment adaptation and the roles of the teacher in implementing these assessment adaptations. Conducting this review of the literature allowed an in-depth understanding of the topic under study and assisted grounding this research project within current theory. During this literature review, it was established that the practice of assessment adaptation is a key component of an inclusive education system as the practice ensures that all learners are able to display their competencies on an equal footing. These assessment adaptations can take on a myriad of forms that are informed by the barriers that each learner experiences. Although the implementation of assessment adaptations starts in the planning phase of assessment, contextual and situational information needs to be considered when deciding on appropriate adaptation methods.

Various recently published sources of literature, both locally and internationally, place an emphasis on assessment adaptation. Where previously only principles on the implementation of these practices existed, documents are now available to inform the practical implementation of assessment adaptation. This study aimed to build on this momentum and explore the realities of the teachers who are responsible for the practical implementation of these adaptations. In doing so, this thesis also aims to add to the limited

body of knowledge on the implementation of inclusive education in the private school sector in South Africa, a topic that has not been extensively documented.

Where this chapter explored existing literature on assessment adaptations, the next chapter will articulate how this literature informed the research design and process.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate a private primary school teachers' familiarity of assessment adaptations. In Chapter One, the research design and methodology were briefly introduced and discussed. This was followed by a review of existing literature on the topics explored in Chapter Two. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design and methodology that guided this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the process of choosing a research methodology "involves choosing a study design that corresponds with your question; you should also consider whether the design is a comfortable match with your worldview, personality, and skills" (p. 1). Within this chapter, the different aspects of data collection and analysis are explained. Furthermore, the measures that were taken to ensure credibility and dependability and how ethical considerations framed the research process are defined.

##### 3.1.1 Research question and purpose

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) explain that " [f]or many kinds of research, the framing of the research question(s) is critical; it focuses, centres, shapes, steers and drives the entire research and it is the answers to the research questions in which the researcher is interested" (p. 165). The study aimed to answer the following main question:

**What familiarity do private primary school teachers have of assessment adaptations?**

The research question was answered by exploring the following themes:

- Defining assessment adaptation.
- Role players in the implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teacher's knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teacher's attitudes toward assessment adaptation.



**In doing so, the study pursued the following objectives:**

- To establish how teachers at a private primary school understand and define assessment adaptations.
- To establish teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of their ability to implement assessment adaptations in their classrooms.
- The knowledge gained during the study was used in drafting a policy on assessment adaptation for the school at which the research was conducted.

The research question and objectives were framed within an inclusive education context as formally adopted in South Africa (DoE, 2001). Although there are several policies regarding assessment within an inclusive education system, the researcher found that literature that deals with the implementation of assessment adaptations in a South African context are limited, even though the practice of such adaptations is integral in an inclusive education context (DoBE, 2016). As such, the researcher set out to establish the experiences of teachers in implementing and administering such adaptations in their classrooms.

**3.1.2 Overview of the research process**

Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2009) explain that the research process is a process that first starts with a big picture, research question and then develops into a more detailed picture. They use a diagram that clarifies this process as can be seen in figure 3.1:

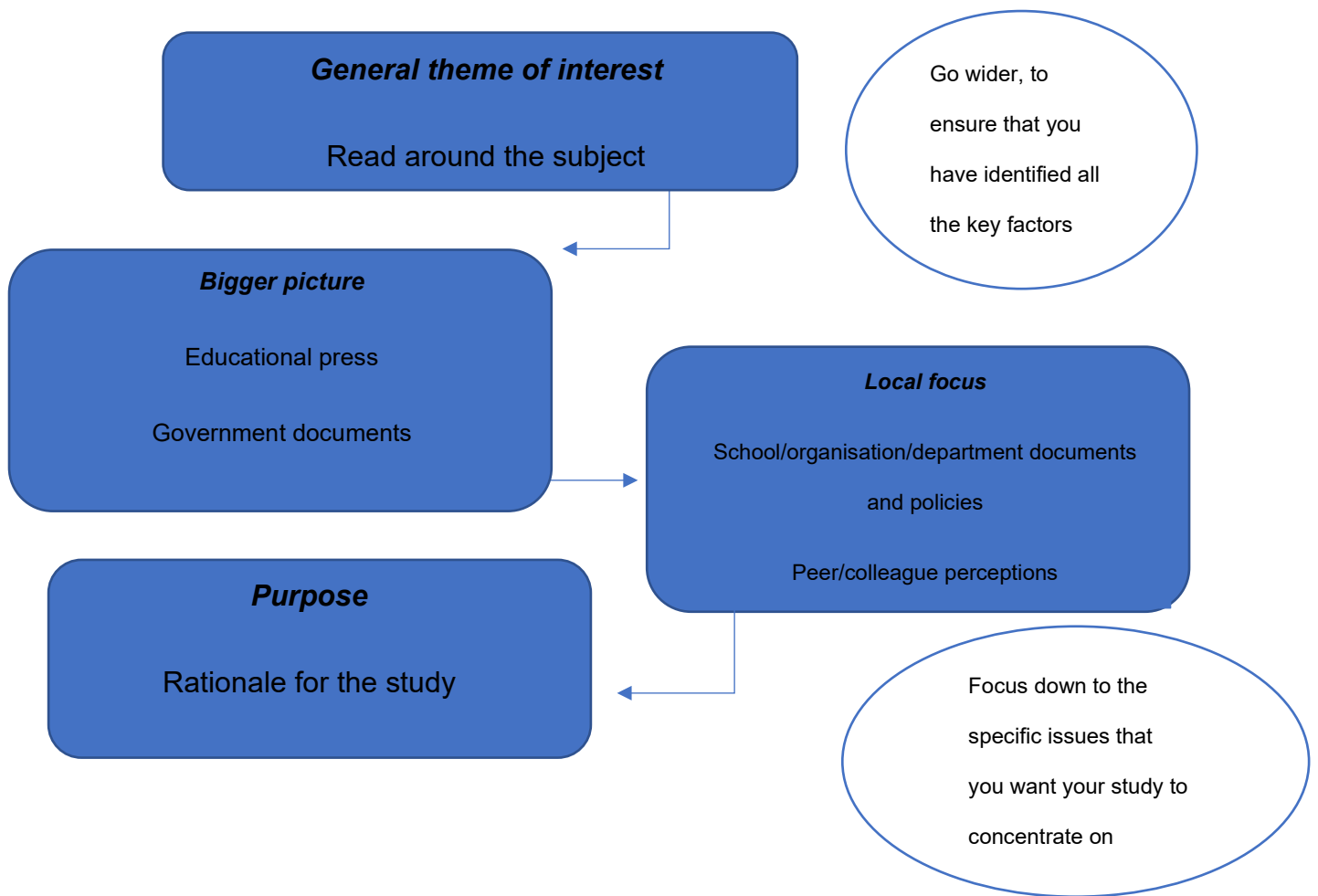


Figure 3.1 – Research process (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2009, p. 27).

The figure above displays the process of narrowing the focus of the research gradually, ensuring that the study is focused enough to draw meaningful conclusions while retaining information on the context in which the study is conducted. This approach enabled the researcher to appropriately define the research question logically.

Conway (2017) has a comprehensive diagram that she uses to explain her research process (p. 47). The researcher has adapted this diagram to explain her process as can be seen in figure 3.2:

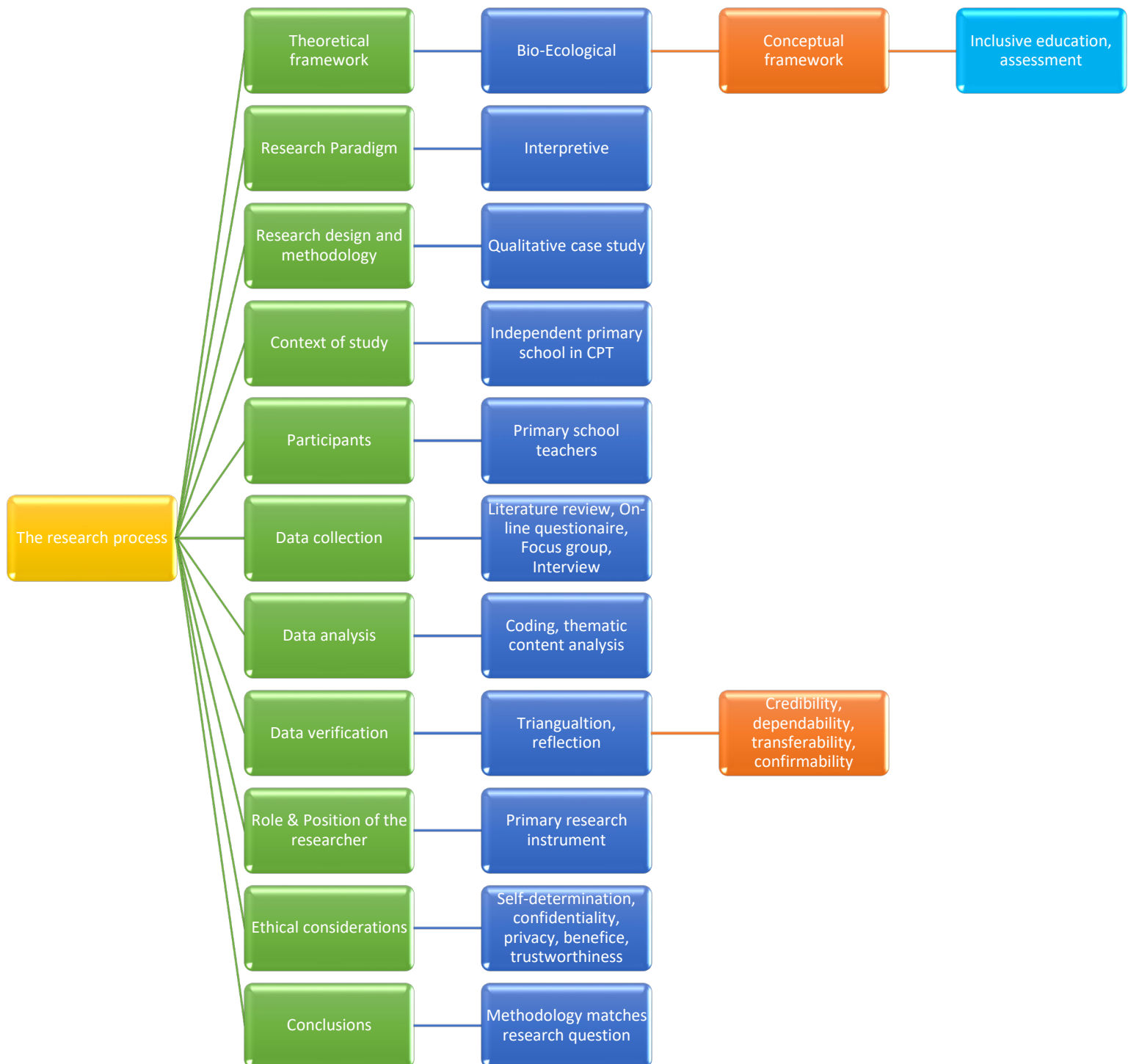


Figure 3.2 – My research process adapted from Conway (2017, p. 47).

This figure displays the key elements of the research process. It displays that the research process is multi-faceted, with the underlying segments each contributing to the whole. All research should be embedded into a theoretical framework, as it guides the thought and understanding process of a researcher.

### 3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework can be described as the process through which the researcher evaluates the research. Adom, Hussein and Joe (2018) state that the conceptual framework “is linked with the concepts, empirical research and important theories used in promoting and systemizing the knowledge espoused by the researcher” (p. 439). The conceptual framework thus describes how our ideas in the research relate to one another. Adom et al., (2018) add that “the purpose of a conceptual framework is to aid the researcher to identify and construct their world view on the phenomenon that is investigated” (p. 439). Figure 3.3 below displays the conceptual framework used in this study:

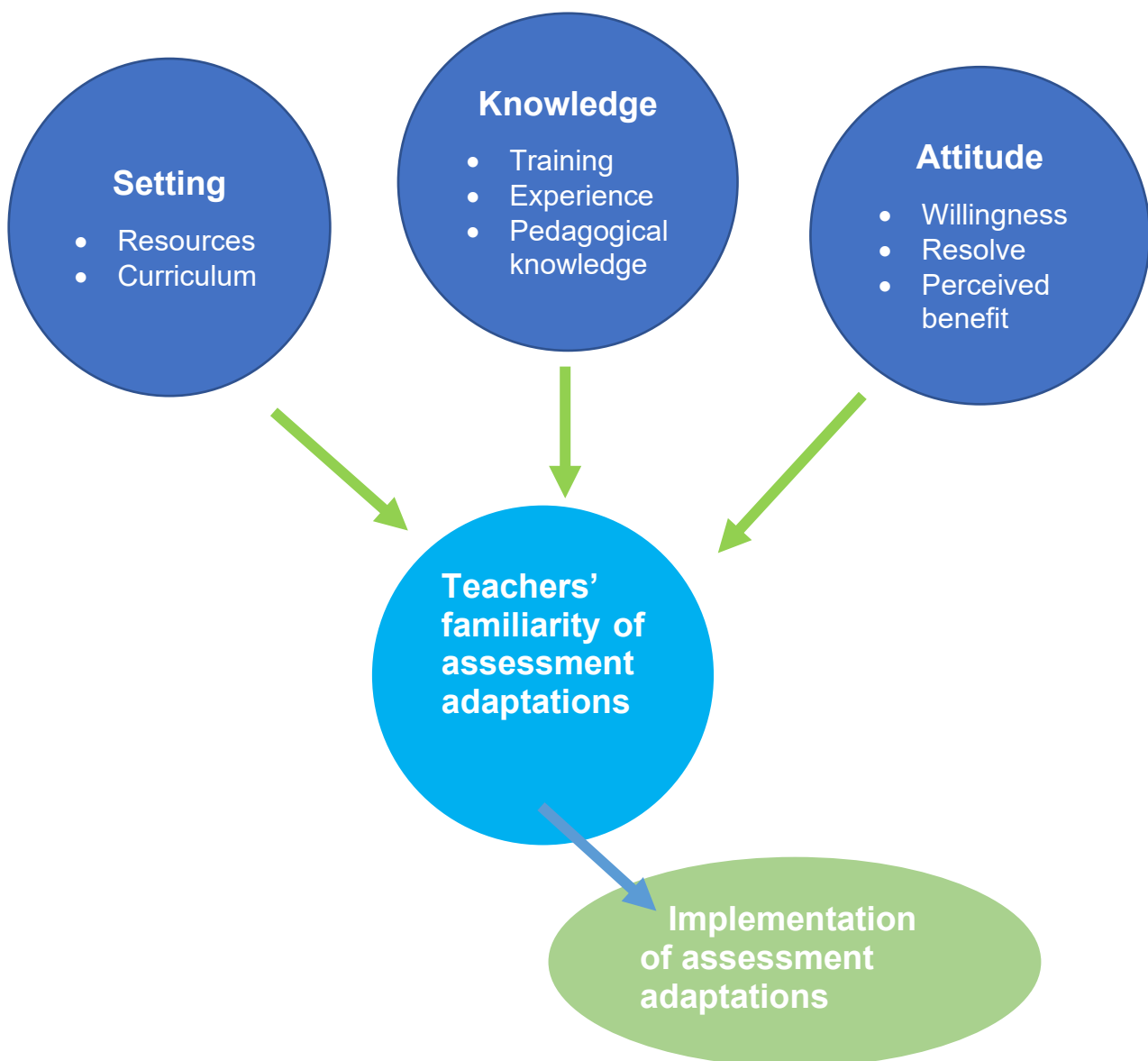


Figure 3.3- Conceptual framework

The study focuses on assessment practices within an inclusive education system. The extensive literature review in Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework of Assessment Theory that guided this study. Assessment Theory frames the guidelines and practices of assessment and is integral to the interpretation of phenomena that forms part of the assessment process. Bouwer (2019) states that Assessment Theory draws from a variety of stances but must include a systemic perspective, the asset-based approach, principles of dynamic assessment and adaptations in assessment, as well as knowledge of impairments and curriculum subjects (p. 74). While the main focus of this study was on assessment adaptation, the principles of the asset-based approach, dynamic assessment, and knowledge of impairments and curricula were also detailed as these are critical to the practice of assessment adaptation.

A systemic perspective grounds the research, as it considers contextual information and recognises that impairments are not solely located in the individual and that the effect of interventions will never be limited to an individual (Nel, 2015, p. 2). This study made use of a systemic perspective as the theoretical framework to study the phenomenon of assessment adaptation within a specific context. The systemic perspective that was used, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, is successful in analysing teachers' practices (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 11).

### **3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The bio-ecological model is presented here as the theoretical framework through which the knowledge and practice of assessment adaptation could be understood in a specific context. "Bronfenbrenner has had a particularly wide and significant influence in shaping our understanding of how different levels of a system in the social context interact in the process of child development" (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, Educational Psychology in Social Context, 2007, p. 40). Swart and Pettipher (2019) explain that the bio-ecological model that was created by Bronfenbrenner can "also assist us to understand and explore inclusive education as being about the development of systems (e.g. mainstream education systems), and the development of individuals (e.g. knowledge and skills of teachers) within these systems" (p. 11). Swart and Pettipher (2019) explain the origin of the bio-ecological model noting that Bronfenbrenner's first version of the bio-ecological system was completed in the 1970s where he explained "the direct and indirect influences on a child's life by referring to many levels of contexts (microsystem, mesosystems,

exosystems, macrosystems, chronosystem) or environments that influence a person's development" (p. 12). These systems are all relevant to the context of this study and will be defined in turn.

### **Individual:**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the innermost level assesses the individual in his or her immediate setting and stage of development (p. 3). The study does not focus on a specific individual, but rather on individuals that share certain attributes and differ in others. The individuals that partook in the study are all teachers, working at a single private school in Cape Town, South Africa. These individuals have completed varying levels of education but have all obtained a formal teaching qualification. All of them have teaching experience, ranging from one year to 20 years.

### **Microsystem:**

Bronfenbrenner (1994) states that the microsystem includes the immediate environment a person interacts with, on a face-to-face basis (p. 39). In the context of this study, the microsystem that is being explored is the school at which the research was conducted. This school is an independent private school that recently opened its doors. The school expresses that they utilise an inclusive methodology to teaching and accommodates learners who experience different barriers to learning in a single classroom. The school is unique in the sense that all facets of education were redesigned – from the school building to the equipment used, the pedagogy and the teaching methodology. The school embraces the use of technology to enhance the teaching experience.

### **Mesosystem:**

The mesosystem can be described as a system of microsystems that interrelate with each other (Nel, Nel, & Hugo, *Inclusive education: An introduction*, 2016, p. 18). Swart and Pettipher (2019) further explain that "[a]t this level the family, school, and peer group interacts with one another, modifying each of the systems" (p. 15). In this system, the family can influence the school system and the school can influence the family system. Swart and Pettipher (2019) give an example where they explain that if a child comes from an unsupported family, the school system can have great impact over time on the child's "self-esteem and sense of security, [t]hus the experience in the microsystem of the school becomes a protective resource for children by providing constructive relationships and support to buffer the psychological effects of the unsupportive environment at home" (p. 15). The school that was used for the study is proud of the support structures they provide

to both learners and parents. By having regular conversations with parents, the school can quickly pick up if a child requires more support in the school system. This type of support is also important for parents as they often need guidance from the school to create environments at home to offer guidance to their children. The school uses a philosophy where they believe that conflict can be resolved through conversations with each other, guided by a teacher, creating moments for both parties to learn skills on how to resolve conflict.

### **Exosystem:**

The exosystem “refers to one or more environments in which the developing learner is not involved directly as an active participant but which may influence or be influenced by what happens in settings and relationships that directly influence the learner” (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 15). In this context, it entails the school’s interaction and standing within the community and education system. The school is a private school and thus does not form part of a chain group i.e. Curro and Reddam. However, the school is a member of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, where it is bound to adhere to all policies promulgated by ISASA. The school is set in a newly developed neighbourhood that houses a variety of families from different ethnicities and backgrounds. According to Frith (2011), most households in the neighbourhood regard English as their first language, with the language also being employed as the primary language of teaching at the school. The neighbourhood is predominantly made up of middle-class households. Learners who attend the school are primarily from the neighbourhood or adjacent neighbourhoods, with a few learners travelling vast distances to attend the school. The school does not receive any funding from the state. According to ISASA (2016), independent schools make up 6,9% of the schooling sector in South Africa, with the number of learners enrolled in the independent schools more than doubling between 2000 and 2015 (p. 2). Independent and private schools have become increasingly popular in the South African context due to numerous reasons. One such reason is the difference in Learner Educator Ratio (LER) between public and private schools. Business Tech (2018) quotes the Department of Basic Education as stating that the national LER for government schools stands at 35.2 (Writer, 2018, p. 1), while the Western Cape recorded the worst figure of 38.4 learners per educator. LER figures for private schools vary, but are typically much lower, with the school at which the research was conducted recording an LER of 15:1. The LER and other factors, such as available resources have made independent schools attractive options for many parents and notably also for the parents of learners experiencing barriers to

learning. It can be argued that these learners have a higher likelihood of receiving individual attention in a school with a lower LER.

**Macrosystem:**

The macrosystem “refers to dominant social and economic structures and the attitudes, beliefs, values, and ideologies inherent in the systems of a particular society and culture” (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 14). This could include culture, religion, and political climate influences on the country. The school that has been investigated is based in South Africa, a diverse country with a magnitude of cultures that come together. The country has eleven official languages and houses 57 million people.

**Chronosystem:**

The chronosystem refers to “the dimension of time and how it relates specifically to the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development” (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 15). The study was conducted in the school’s second year of operation. While the school follows an inclusive philosophy, no policy on either inclusion or assessment adaptation had been drafted at the time of the study. The school had a total of 487 learners enrolled (updated numbers on 25 February 2020) from Grade 000-7, with Grade 7 added in 2020 and a Secondary school starting in 2021.



The diagram below presents the context of the study within the Bio-ecological model:

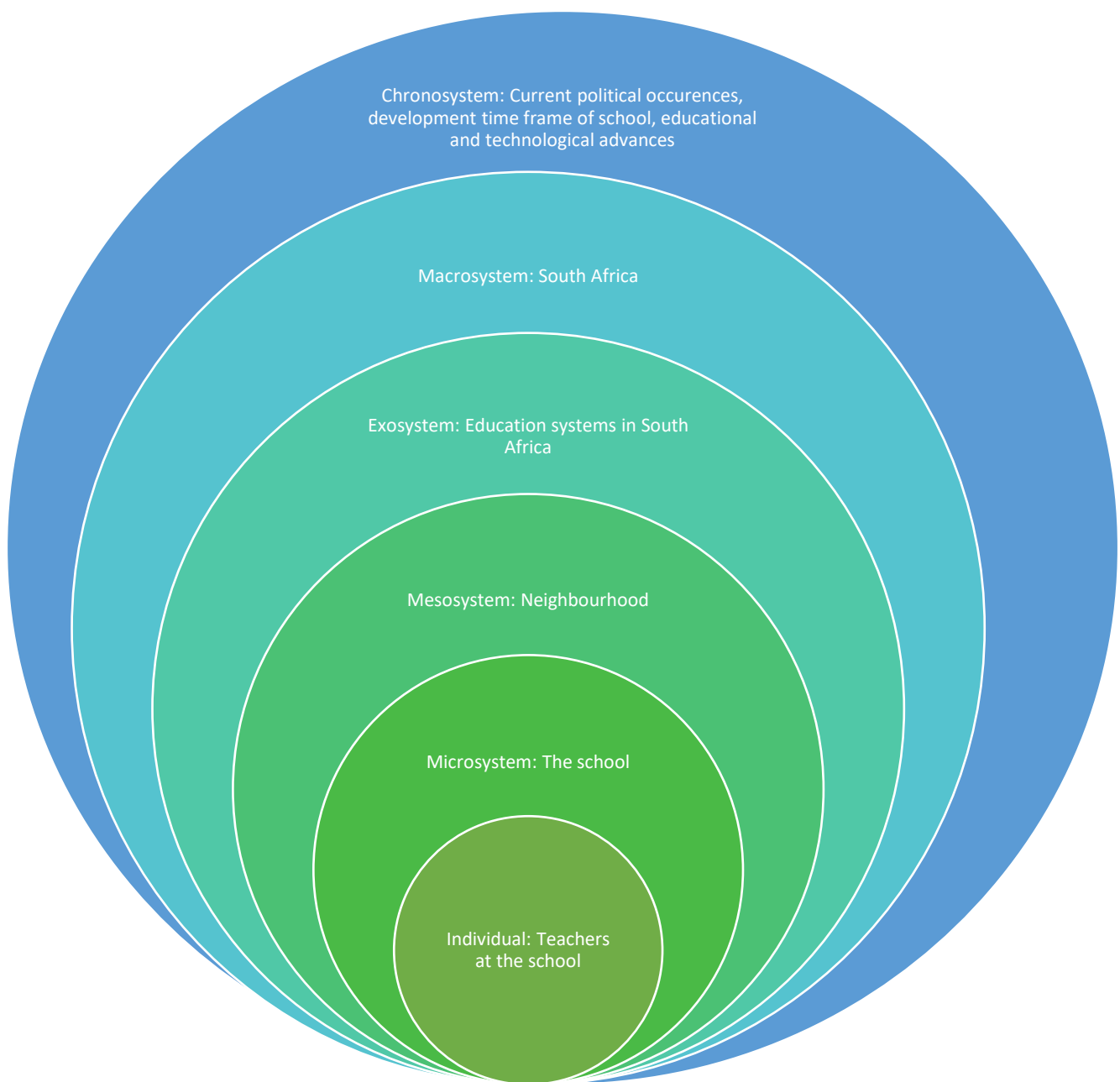


Figure 3.4 – The bio-ecological model (Psychology Notes HQ, 2019).

### 3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

While researching different paradigms, which include the positivistic, interpretive and constructionist paradigm, the researcher realised that the paradigm chosen to conduct the research must align with her view of the world. A paradigm can be described as “a way of looking at or researching phenomena, a world view, a view of what counts as accepted or correct scientific knowledge or a way of working, an acceptable model or pattern, a shared

belief system or a set of principles, the identity of a research community” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8). The positivist paradigm is explained by Hammersley (2013, p. 10 as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8) as being “characterized by hypothesis testing, numerical data, procedural objectivity, generalization [...] and the isolation and control of variables” (Cohen et al., 2018). The interpretivist paradigm, on the other hand, can be explained as the paradigm that “rests, in part, on a subjectivist, interactionist, socially constructed ontology and on an epistemology that recognises multiple realities, agentic behaviours and importance of understanding a situation through the eyes of the participants” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 175). The constructivist paradigm shows how individuals or communities produce versions of reality through their discourses.

After considering the purpose of this study and reflecting on my world view, a qualitative interpretive paradigm was chosen in which to conduct this research. This paradigm recognises that the truth and the views people hold of the world constantly change and evolve (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 175). This is because the truth lies in interactions between people and their environment. The use of this paradigm allows the researcher to focus on a smaller group of research participants as the aim is to derive the quality of data, not quantity. The aim of the study is not to be able to conclude about the nature of the whole population, but rather to describe the experiences of participants accurately and richly

### **3.4.1 Research design**

A qualitative case study design was chosen for the purpose of this study, as it seeks to look at “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). This links directly with the interpretivist paradigm as it is necessary to recognise that multiple realities exist before studying these realities and how they are constructed. The study aimed to understand and interpret participants’ experiences and knowledge about a phenomenon. In choosing the specific variant of case study to use, the researcher found that “case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether it is one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity” (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007, p. 246). A decision was taken to focus on a single phenomenon (assessment adaptation) within a single setting (a private primary school). In researching a single case of a phenomenon, the researcher seeks to increase the body of knowledge about assessment adaptation. Creswell et al., (2007) further add that case studies can be differentiated in terms of intent. In this study, a single instrumental case

study was chosen to allow the researcher to focus “on an issue or concern and then select on a bounded case to illustrate this issue” (p. 246).

Although the purpose of a qualitative case study is not to produce replicable results, the insights gained during the study may be generalised if the context and limitations of the study are understood and accounted for (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 248; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257). The practice of assessment adaptation is a phenomenon that occurs in various schools, with various role-players playing a role in its practice and implementation. The study focused on the experiences of teachers as the people who are primarily responsible for the implementation of assessment adaptation. Although the study was conducted as a single instrumental case study, at a single school, it made use of various data sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic being analysed. The researcher took care to ensure alignment between the theoretical framework, the purpose of the research, the context in which the research took place, the research paradigm, and the techniques used to carry out the research.

Punch (2009) describes a research design as being “the basic plan for a piece of research that includes four main ideas” (p. 112) as seen in figure 3.5:



Figure 3.5 – The basic plan for a piece of research adapted from (Punch, 2009, p.113).

The figure displays how the research design is informed by various factors. As such, it displays that the design must match the intent of the research and the context in which the research is conducted.

By selecting a single school at which to conduct this case study research, the researcher was able to explore the practice of assessment adaptation in greater detail, even though she acknowledges that practices employed, and the resulting experiences of teachers related to these practices may differ from school to school. However, it was theorised that a more thorough description of the experiences of a single group would yield a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences, knowledge, and attitude towards assessment adaptations.

### **3.4.2 Ontology and epistemology**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), ontology and epistemology refer to the nature of what is known and how it is known (p. 8). The interpretivist paradigm can, therefore, be aligned with qualitative research as it recognises that there are multiple, fluid versions of the truth, derived from multiple participants (epistemology), that are shaped by their experiences and the way they interact with each other and their environment (ontology). Sikes (2004) states that ontology ultimately frames what can be regarded as 'valid' within the parameters of the paradigm (p. 20).

The reality is thus defined in the nature of what is known (ontology) and the manner in which such knowledge is known (epistemology). A constructivist approach was chosen for the study as the knowledge gained through the use of a constructivist approach to the research is aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. In addition, the constructivist approach allows the researcher to conclude how past experiences are translated into knowledge, which then ultimately informs the actions taken by the individual (Ultanir, 2012, p. 196). This is especially relevant in this study where the researcher focuses on how teachers' past experiences of assessment adaptation inform their knowledge and attitude towards assessment adaptation. The research methods used to collect and interpret data were therefore selected in alignment with the qualitative interpretive paradigm that guided this research.

## **3.5 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH**

Van Wyk (2015) states that a researcher must "always seek to know the context of the community being investigated to understand his or her role and the overall importance of the enquiry" (p. 11). Resultantly, the researcher sought first to understand the setting in which the research is to be conducted, as well as the effect that this context would have on the outcomes of the study. With establishing the focus of the research question, a primary school had to be found that adhered to the set criteria, i.e. that it is a private school and practices inclusive education. A specific school in Cape Town was purposefully selected for the study. The school uses a unique, modern approach to education and the researcher wanted to investigate how this approach to education would impact the implementation of assessment adaptations. In addition, convenience was a factor that was considered in the selection of the school. The researcher previously taught at the school

and could thus arrange access to participants. This school employs a full support team that is housed at the school. As a result, learners and teachers at the school have access to a variety of support services from different disciplines (Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Learning Support teacher and Music Therapist). The researcher has taught at the school at which the research was conducted for a period of a year. At the time when data was collected, she was no longer employed at the school and hence she does not believe that this fact affects her objectivity in the conduct of the research.

The school opened in 2019 on premises in a newly developed suburb. All buildings on the premises were purposefully designed and care was taken to design furniture and utilities to create an engaging, flexible learning environment. In its first year of operation, the school employed 22 teachers in the primary school phase, who were responsible for educating 260 learners. In the second year, the school grew rapidly to 487 learners and 36 teachers. Learners primarily reside in the suburb in which the school is situated or in adjacent suburbs. The school embraces an inclusive philosophy in their teaching and as such accommodates a host of learners who experience different barriers to learning. The flexible learning environment and curricula of the school enable it to educate a wide variety of learners with differing levels of competencies.

### **3.6 METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is described as the process of studying the research problem and the underlying logic behind the research (University of Pretoria, 2020). As such the research methodology is informed by the theory underlying the research while, in turn, it influences the conclusions that the researcher stands to make about a phenomenon (University of Pretoria, 2020). A qualitative research methodology was chosen for the purpose of the study to conduct this research. This methodology allows the researcher to investigate assessment adaptation using an interpretive paradigm.

#### **3.6.1 Research participants**

Conway (2017) explains that “[p]articipants in a qualitative study need to have the relevant knowledge and experience needed for the study and be willing and reflective in their sharing of information” (p. 51). A non-probability sample was selected for the study, following a purposive sampling approach. The researcher aimed to obtain a

heterogeneous sample to establish a variety of accounts regarding familiarities and experiences with assessment adaptations. This enabled her to collect a wide spectrum of accounts obtained from participants which ultimately supported the purpose of obtaining and documenting rich accounts of the experiences of the research participants. Two factors served as consideration to form part of the study. Firstly, convenience was a determining factor in the decision regarding which school to choose and which participants to interview in the study. The location of the school was also chosen due to convenience and relationships that were built over time with school management. Secondly, the availability was also important. Teachers are extremely busy and always have a tight schedule. Therefore, it was important to find participants who had free time and were willing to give time out of their schedule. The teachers at the school come from different backgrounds. The study focused on including accounts obtained from teachers who have obtained different levels of qualification and hold varying degrees of experience.

It is acknowledged that the use of a non-probability sampling method “tends to be subjective and judgmental, according to the researcher’s purpose” (Lumadi, 2015, p. 230). However, the researcher believes that a degree of subjectivity would be more than compensated for by the rich data obtained from the study (Lumadi, 2015, p. 230). Also, the purpose of the study is not to obtain universal knowledge that would be applicable in all contexts (although the findings may be replicable), but rather to relate the experiences of participants in detail. After engaging with the school principal to obtain consent and to schedule a convenient time, teachers were invited to attend an information session in which the objectives of the study and research methodology were explained. A total of 13 respondents were approached to partake in the study, of which 10 agreed. These teachers were identified by the Deputy Principal of the school. Teachers from both the junior as well as the senior phase were included in the study. These teachers currently teach learners in Grades 000 - 7, with some also having experience in teaching higher and lower grades. A Google form was used to gather the information (see Addendum A, this will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4).

### **3.6.2 Data collection**

The researcher selected data collection methods that are in line with the qualitative research methodology and interpretive paradigm. Various methods of data collection were used to collect an array of data to answer the research question. The researcher reviewed

relevant literature and policies. Various methods of data collection, including an individual interview, a questionnaire and a focus group were used to collect data.

### **3.6.2.1 Literature review**

The literature review, which is often the first step to research, contextualises and grounds the study and provides a conceptual framework for the research. The literature review included seminal and scholarly works in the fields related to the research topic to identify topics that needed further investigation, as well as, to identify opportunities to build on the knowledge contained in previous studies. Lichtman (2010) states that a literature review is more than a compilation of research studies as “[i]t represents a synthesis and critical assessment related to a particular topic” (p. 126). A literature review is thus an assessment in itself, assessing not only what has been written, but also what has not. The researcher was cognisant of the viewpoints from which articles were written, evaluating not only whose story was being told in the research, but also assessing who told it and which framework was used to tell it.

The researcher agrees with Lichtman (2010), who argues that a literature review “should be interwoven into the framework of a qualitative research project” (p. 128). Therefore, the process of the literature review was not deemed to be complete after Chapter 2 of this research project was finalised. Instead, the literature review entailed a continuous process of scholarly review that was conducted during all stages of the research process to identify new gaps, as well as to infer new ideas and insights. The researcher thus extensively researched the topics of inclusive education, assessment, assessment adaptations, private schools in South Africa and the role of the teacher. A variety of media, including scholarly articles, books, journals, and web-based articles were reviewed to inform, contextualise, ground, and inform the research project.

### **3.6.2.2 Online Questionnaire**

Cohen et al., (2018) state that a questionnaire is a “widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data” (p. 471). For this reason, it was decided that the initial data collection for this study would be completed through an electronic questionnaire (Addendum A). Gillham (2007) describes a questionnaire as a set of questions posed to research participants to solicit a response (p. 2). He adds that questionnaires normally comprise of structured questions which



respondents are required to answer on their own. In the research project, a questionnaire was used to gather basic demographic data about the participants. The information retrieved from the questionnaire informed the interpretation of data collected in the focus group discussion.

Google forms were used as the platform to conduct the questionnaire. Potential participants' email addresses were received from the school's Deputy Principal after engaging with her about the study. She identified 13 teachers that would be able to participate in the study. Once all relevant informed consent was obtained, the online questionnaire was circulated to participants by sending an email with the link to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was emailed to the 13 teachers with the hope that they would make time to respond to the questionnaire. Ten teachers responded and completed the questionnaire. These teachers are of different ages and have varying levels of education and experience.

The questionnaire was also used to gather initial and exploratory data from participants. It contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions and explored participants' views on inclusive education and assessment adaptations. Closed-ended questions "prescribe the range of responses from which the respondent may choose" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 476), while open-ended questions are questions that "invite an honest, personal comment from respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 475). The questionnaire (Addendum A) was approved by the university's ethics committee before administering it.

Although there are many advantages of using a questionnaire, there are also some disadvantages, the most notable being that questionnaires limit responses in terms of its rigidity and that it only collects self-reports of experiences. Bell (1999), as cited in Opie (2004), corroborates this by stating that "causal relationships can rarely if ever be proved by a questionnaire. The main emphasis is on a fact-finding" (p. 95). To limit the effect of these factors, decisions were made that only exploratory questions (which would later be unpacked further in focus groups) would be included in this questionnaire. The second method of data collection, in the form of a focus group discussion, was used to supplement this method of data collection.

### 3.6.2.3 Focus group

A focus group can be explained as a group of people that use questions as inhibitors to facilitate a conversation. Different opinions about themes and topics are discussed with the researcher playing the role of a mediator, recording detailed responses. Mertens (2005) is of the opinion that the participants of a focus group can exhibit “[v]ariation in terms of characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, gender, or disability [and recommends] using heterogeneous groups versus homogeneous groups” (p. 246). However, Lichtman (2010) states the opposite of Mertens by stating that focus groups do not have to represent “the population in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or education level” (p. 155). She emphasises this by arguing that “[t]here is no scientific research that speaks to group size, group number, or group composition” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 155). Therefore, the focus group for this study comprised of teachers who were purposefully selected as they have the best knowledge and first-hand experience about the topic under research. Cohen et al., (2018, p. 533) are of the opinion that focus groups hold many benefits to collecting data, namely that this method is low in cost and is not time-consuming. It is a way of collecting qualitative data that allows individuals to voice out their opinions about the relevant topic, giving a more in-depth frame of reference about the topic researched and gathers more themes and data than other approaches. This method was also preferred for this study since it not only solicits individual responses but also collective views, as the focus group opened up a space for discussion and debate, not only between the researcher and a single research participant but among research participants themselves.

The participants for the focus group all participated voluntarily. Morgan (1998 as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 533) suggests that focus groups should have four to twelve people where, Fowler (2009, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 533) recommends six to eight people to be part of a focus group discussion (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, a decision was taken to invite all 13 teachers who received the online questionnaire with the hope that between 8 – 10 teachers would participate on the day of the focus group discussion. A total of ten teachers eventually partook in the discussion.

The focus group discussion was conducted electronically using Google Meet, at a time that was deemed to be convenient for participants. The discussion was originally scheduled to be conducted at the school but was moved to a digital platform due to fears associated with the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus at the time of data collection. Two separate focus group discussions were hosted at different times to accommodate

participants. Both sessions were recorded digitally after obtaining permission from participants. This enabled the researcher to visit and revisit information obtained during the focus group discussion to ensure that an exhaustive record of the discussion was obtained. This data was then used to identify themes and answer the research questions.

A variety of themes about assessment adaptation that emerged from the questionnaire were explored during the focus group discussion. The researcher identified general themes to be discussed and explored before the session and a broad range of questions that could catalyse discussions on these themes but refrained from setting a formal discussion agenda. This was done as the researcher wanted to provide ample opportunity for participants to air their views and share their experiences. The discussions were scheduled after prior consultation with the principal. Given the measures taken to ensure the validity of the study, the researcher believes that the focus group discussions reflected the realities of the research participants.

### **3.6.3 Data analysis**

Taylor and Gibbs (2010), state that “qualitative data analysis concerns how we move from the data to understanding, explaining and interpreting the phenomena in question” (as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 643). It is a process that, unlike the case of quantitative data, cannot be separated from the data gathering process, as the two processes often occur concurrently, with various tasks overlapping both gathering and interpretation. Mertens (2005) describes different levels of data analysis that occurs at various stages of the study and explain that analysis can be done daily while collecting data, to inform the next steps of data gathering and to be used as a method to verify any hypotheses (Mertens, 2005, p. 421). This process places a heavy reliance on inductive reasoning techniques, as it is “often heavy on interpretation” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 643). In this process of inductive reasoning, the researcher “develops interpretations of the data and derives themes, concepts, theories, explanations, understandings, models, etc” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 645).

As such, the responsibility of the researcher is to prove that the analysis was done “without preconceptions or deductions from a pre-given framework” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 645). This essentially required that the researcher recognised the need to retain the reliability and validity of data. In this study, the researcher constantly reflected on her own conceptions and how these influenced her view of the world and the interpretation of the

data gathered during the research. Consequently, records of the original data were retained, and details were recorded of all steps taken to reduce and to analyse the data. Cohen et al., (2018) state that the process of analysis involves “[d]ata reduction, data display, data analysis, and interpretation, drawing and verifying conclusions and reporting the analysis and findings” (p. 643).

In accordance with the interpretive qualitative research design, thematic content analysis was used to reduce and organise data gathered in the research process. This process entailed that the researcher took “a large amount of data that may be cumbersome and without any clear meaning and interact[s] with it in such a manner that you (the researcher) can make sense of what you gathered” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 195). As such, data was organised and coded into centrally identified themes to be able to draw comparisons between responses. The data gathered in the questionnaire were analysed first to allow the researcher to utilise insights gathered from the questionnaire in the focus group discussions. This process was repeated in various cycles until a stage of “emergence of regularities: that is, no new information emerges with additional analysis” (Mertens, 2005, p. 421). Throughout this whole process, the researcher used various techniques to verify data and to ensure integrity.

### **3.7 DATA VERIFICATION**

An effort was made to ensure that the research reflects the true experiences of participants. Data verification was considered throughout the research process, from the research design onward. Therefore, the researcher ensured that participant triangulation was built into the research design to obtain various accounts from different individuals (Flick, 2018, p. 5). A conscious effort was made to verify details, and where applicable, to request clarity from participants that made ambiguous statements. Cohen et al., (2018) state that “[w]ords are inherently ambiguous and polyvalent” (p. 684), which means that clarity needs to be gained under certain circumstances. The researcher believes that the best method of verification is to go back to the source, as that can translate what exactly was meant. Participants had the chance to provide further inputs after data was analysed and to revise material before publishing to ensure that the research project was a true reflection of their responses.

The literature review that was conducted was used to gain an understanding of the relevant theories employed in the inductive reasoning process. Therefore, where possible, assumptions were informed by existing theories.

### **3.7.1 Credibility and dependability**

Qualitative research cannot be measured on the principles of credibility and dependability using conventional methods of scientific validation, as it involves subjective judgment on the part of the researcher (Silverman, 2019, p. 84). Cohen et al., (2018) state that the key criteria to evaluate validity in qualitative research are (a) credibility (reflecting the truth), (b) transferability (being able to describe similar phenomena), (c) dependability (that reliance can be placed on the research reflecting true experiences) and (d) confirmability (that the researcher provides participants' accounts of experiences, not her own) (p. 248). The researcher was cognisant of the importance of ensuring that the findings of the research were credible and dependable.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise that triangulation remains an appropriate perspective to ensure credibility in a study (p. 246). Triangulation is described by Lichtman (2010) as "the idea that multiple sources bring more credibility to an investigation" (p. 229). She then presents five types of triangulation, namely: 1) data, 2) investigator-, 3) theory-, 4) methodological-, and 5) environmental triangulation (Lichtman, 2010, p. 229). For this study, data triangulation was used, where data was gathered through different data collection methods and from different individuals to ensure that different versions of the truth were presented.

### **3.7.2 Role of the researcher**

The researcher recognises that in this study, as in all qualitative studies, the results obtained are subject to the interpretation of the researcher, and by implication to the view that the researcher holds of the world (Hall, 2004, p. 2). Any inferences drawn were subject to a degree of discourse, as it entailed that the researcher had to construct meaning from observed phenomena. Hence, the researcher recognises that she, herself, was, in fact, the primary method of research used to collect and analyse data. According to Mertens (2005) "qualitative research texts recognise the importance of researchers' reflecting on their own values, assumptions, beliefs and biases and monitoring those as they progress through the study to determine their impact on the study's data and interpretation" (p. 247). Following this recognition, the researcher made every attempt to

submerge herself in the data while remaining vigilant to remain objective (as possible) and fair, to derive meaning from the collected data that reflect the realities of teachers' experiences of assessment adaptation.

Data was also gathered through a focus group discussion. According to Lichtman (2010), the researcher not only has an important role during the focus group discussion but also "plays a key role prior to the actual focus group interview" (p.155). She further states that "[t]he researcher is instrumental in deciding what questions will be included; whether there will be high, moderate, or low structure; and how the group will be conducted" (p. 155). Throughout the process of data gathering, consolidation and presentation, the researcher remained conscious of her duty to exercise her "role[s] and responsibilities in a fair and transparent manner" while reporting "the facts, without fear or favour" (van Wyk, 2015, p. 11).

### **3.7.3 Ethical considerations**

Flick (2011) states that ethics should frame the whole research process. From the gathering of data to analysis and presentation. This is, as ethical considerations directly affect the credibility and dependability of the research (Flick, 2011). The ethical factors that were considered in the conduct of this research were as follows:

- All participants were required to provide informed consent.
- No participants were deceived regarding any factor of the research or their participation therein.
- The privacy of participants was respected and maintained.
- Data were analysed with care to ensure that information was presented accurately.
- Participants were treated with respect and dignity.
- The research had to provide a tangible benefit.
- The benefits associated with the research had to outweigh any burden associated with the research. Adapted from Flick, 2011, p. 69.

Once ethical clearance (Addendum B) was obtained to conduct the proposed study, the principal of the school was contacted to obtain consent before individual teachers within the school were approached. Participants provided informed consent (Addendum C) to voluntarily take part in the research. Participants were advised (in the information sheet, consent form, and verbally during the focus group discussion) that they could withdraw from the research process at any stage without any consequences. Sieber (1993), states

that “[e]thics has to do with the application of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair” (as cited in Sikes, 2004, p. 25). The researcher remained cognisant of the ethical impact of her study at all levels. She ensured that the study preserved and safeguarded the “dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of all actual or potential participants” (Stellenbosch University, 2019). Ethical considerations guided the research design, process, and presentation. The researcher ensured that the topic being researched and the way it was researched limited harm to participants while ensuring benefit to the community. Risk factors were minimised as the research did not focus on vulnerable groups or marginalised individuals. Data analysis and presentation were done with care to ensure that the research presented the participant's experiences.

Therefore, the guiding principles that were used in this research project were the same principles that regulate the conduct of health professionals (HPCSA, 2016, pp. 2-3). These guiding principles include “respect for persons, beneficence and respect for human rights, autonomy, integrity, tolerance, compassion, confidentiality and justice” (HPCSA, 2016, p. 3). Ethical considerations framed and informed the conduct presented at all stages of the research project and included the following:

### **Right to self-determination**

The researcher respected the rights of research participants to participate in the research project only out of their own free will. Accordingly, all respondents were provided with full disclosure in terms of the extent of the study and the intended use of data before participating in the study. In addition, all respondents provided written informed consent before participation and were advised that such consent would not bind them towards participation in the questionnaire, but that they retain the right to withdraw such consent at any stage.

### **Right to confidentiality and anonymity**

The identity of all research participants was kept private to ensure that the identities of such participants are not disclosed unduly due to any action or negligence on the part of the researcher. As such, the researcher did not retain any material deemed to be of risk at disclosing the identities of participants. All data was obtained electronically, with forms



being completed anonymously. Any disclosure in terms of demographic details pertaining to specific respondents was disclosed with the utmost discretion to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality are not compromised. No personal information was included in the final chapters of the thesis and the researcher used pseudonyms to disguise the identity of participants. The participants permitted the focus group discussion to be recorded and an assurance was given that the recording would be saved on a password protected device and that the transcribed data would be stored in a safe space alongside the recording for five years as required by the faculty. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the data collected.

### **Right to privacy and dignity**

The research participants' right to privacy and dignity was respected by minimising intrusion on their lives while ensuring that they were treated with respect. Resultantly, a conscious effort was made to engage respondents professionally, to ensure that respondents felt valued and appreciated. The presentation of all findings was done in a manner that ensures that no respondent was belittled or adversely affected.

### **The benefit of the research**

The research was conducted in a manner that ensures that no harm was done in the practice of such research, while at the same time ensuring that a degree of beneficence was attributed to the execution of the study. The research project benefitted the respondents as well as the educational system, contributing to the body of knowledge or informing enhanced practices that could serve to the benefit of the broader community.

### **Trustworthiness**

The researcher had a responsibility towards the research participants to ensure that the data obtained is presented in a manner that retains integrity. As qualitative research is subject to interpretation and inductive reasoning, the researcher remained cognisant of her discourses and aimed to minimise the effect of such discourses, to ensure that the research can be regarded as a true reflection of the experiences of respondents. Ethical conduct was regarded as a prerequisite to obtaining true accounts of the experiences of participants which was integral to the success of the research.



### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter served as a detailed description of the research design and methodology that best fitted to answer the research question at hand. Assessment Theory was used as the conceptual framework and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was used as a theoretical framework. Guided by the case study research design and qualitative interpretive paradigm, the researcher aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of the teachers' familiarity with assessment adaptations. The research design and paradigm were deemed to be well suited for this purpose. The data that was gathered and analysed will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected in the study as well as findings derived from the data. Data were collected by three means, namely using a questionnaire, a focus group discussion, and an interview. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the WHO declaring it a pandemic, both the focus group discussion and the questionnaire were administered digitally while still adhering to the initially stated ethical considerations. The data was collected in order to answer the following research question, which directed the research study:

**What familiarity do private primary school teachers have of assessment adaptations?**

This question was answered by gathering insights into the views of private primary school teachers related to the following themes:

- Defining assessment adaptation.
- Role players in the implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teacher's knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation.
- Teacher's attitudes toward assessment adaptation.

The study focused on a single school in a case study research design, with the aim to uncover in-depth information relating to the experiences and realities of research participants. The school at which the research was conducted is a recently opened school in a developing urban suburb. The school claims to employ inclusive practices, even though it does not have a formalised policy regarding inclusion or guidelines pertaining to inclusive practices.

Data collected through the questionnaire focussed on demographic information as well as exploratory information pertaining to the participants' views on assessment adaptation. The information collected through the questionnaire informed questions raised during focus group discussions. The collected data was organised under themes that were

generated by using thematic content analysis. Where this chapter presents and discusses the data collected, Chapter 5 will interpret this data under the relevant research themes.

## **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

The study made use of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model as its theoretical framework and Educational Assessment Theory as the conceptual framework. All insights derived from the data were gained while remaining cognisant of the principles of the bio-ecological model. As such, the emphasis is placed on the context of the research to gain insights into the reality of the research participants. This is done as the bio-ecological model postulates that the views expressed by the individual (teachers) would inevitably be influenced by their environment (systems), while the systems that these teachers interactive with would, in turn, be influenced by their views and resulting actions (Price & McCallum, 2015).

### **4.2.1 The School context**

As the study uses the bio-ecological model as its theoretical framework, the context in which the school operates was considered in the analysis of data and derivation of insights. The bio-ecological model creates a link between the behaviour of individuals and the context/ circumstances in which these individuals' function. Individuals are placed at the centre of systems which affect the individual but in turn, are also affected by the individual.

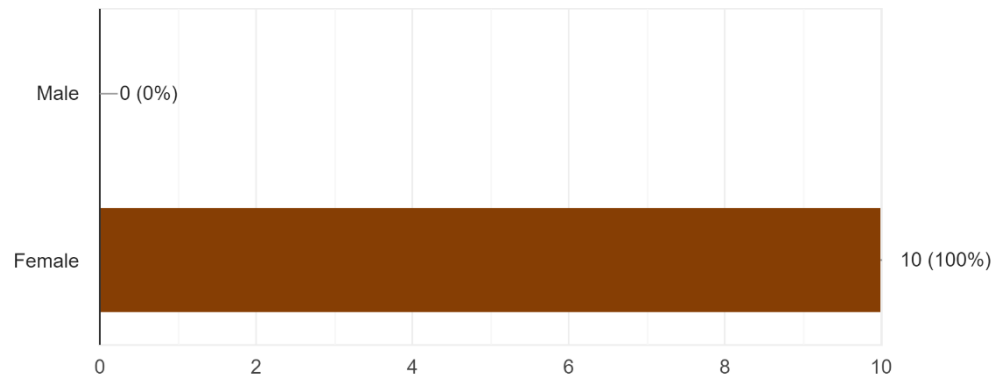
The school that was purposefully selected for this case study is a school that opened its doors in 2019. The principal of the school realised that there was a need in the community for a school that is unique in its approach to education. The principal and the teachers expressed the belief that the school employs inclusive pedagogical methodologies in its teaching. The school boasts a modern, architectural building that was purpose-designed to function as a flexible learning environment. The school is a private English medium, co-ed school that offers instruction to learners from Gr. 000 - 7, with the prospect of opening a High School in 2021. Classes are small, with a maximum of 25 learners in a class and 2-3 classes per grade. Many of the learners that attend the school experience learning difficulties or have been diagnosed with specific learning disorders. The school prides itself on being a school of the 21st century in which they endeavour to prepare children to be able to function optimally in an increasingly technological society. Therefore, various forms of technology are used in the school with iPads being used alongside textbooks. The

school tries to use technology wherever it can to enhance the educational experience. In the Pre-preparatory phase, Reggio Emilio pedagogy is embraced whereas Socratic questioning is dominant in the older grades. Reggio Emilio focuses on aligning the topics taught in the classroom to interests expressed by the learners. This implies that the curriculum is adapted to engage learners instead of relying on learners to develop an interest in predefined themes within the curriculum. Socratic questioning entices learners to delve deeper into nuances and symbolism that is enveloped in teaching, to actively question assumptions instead of merely accepting them. This promotes a curious nature in learners and aids learners to seek innovative solutions to problems.

The school, furthermore, offers various cultural and sports activities before, during and after school. Mandarin and French are offered as part of the curriculum with a Greek club also hosted once a week. The school's classrooms are flexible in the way they are used and in the way the children interact with them.

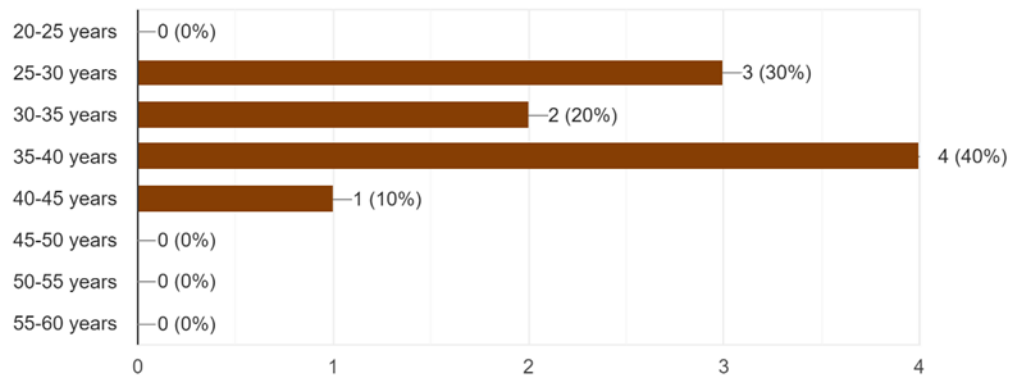
#### 4.2.2 Research participants

The graphs below present details on the demographic particulars of participants:



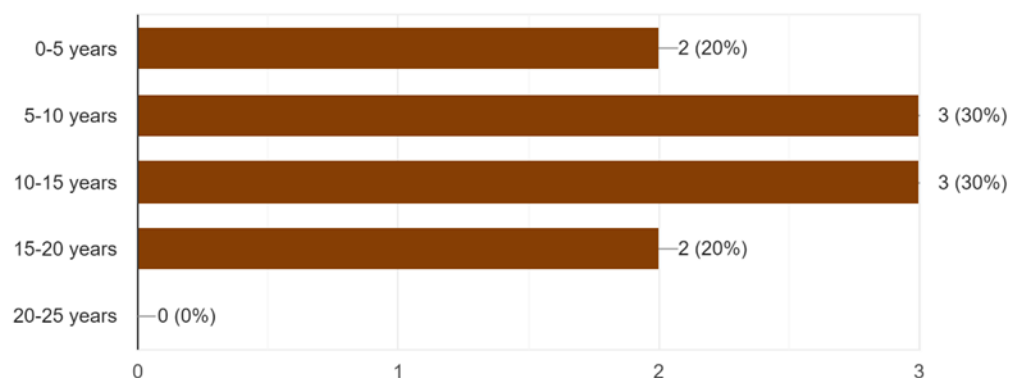
Graph 4.1 Gender of participants

Ten Participants partook in the study, all of whom were female. As per statistics, 73,5% of teachers in South Africa are female (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2017). The school at which the study was conducted employs 2 male teachers who were invited to partake in the study but declined.



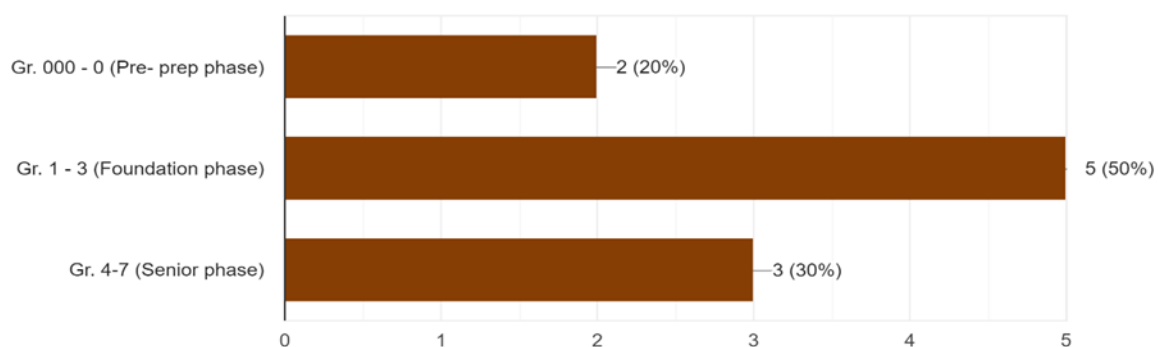
Graph 4.2 Age of participants

The teachers that partook in the study were from varying age groups. In the context where the South African education system and teacher training has undergone various transformations, this would imply that accounts were obtained from teachers who received teacher training aligned to different curricula and most probably employed different teaching practices in their teaching careers.



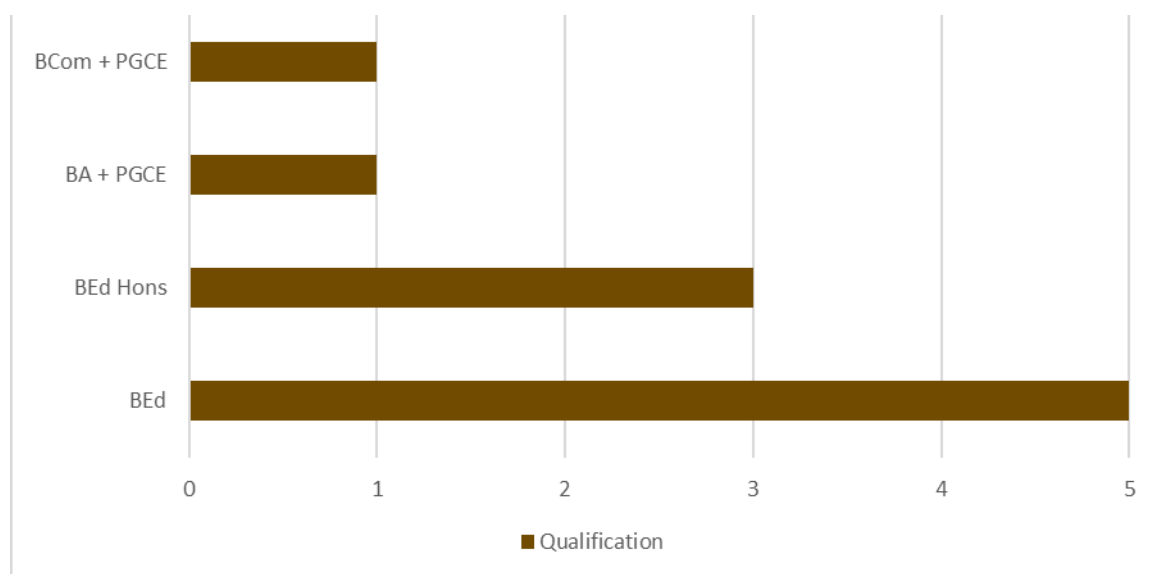
Graph 4.3 Teaching experience of participants

The study obtained accounts from teachers with varying degrees of experience as displayed in the graph. Teachers that partook in the study had a maximum of 18 years of teaching experience, while one participant is completing her first year of teaching.



Graph 4.4 Grades taught by participants

The study included accounts obtained from teachers teaching various phases within a primary school. Teachers in the study, point out that experiences of assessment adaptation could differ depending on the phase that the teacher teaches (as seen later in this chapter). Although most participants currently teach in the Foundation phase, accounts from teachers in other phases were also included.



Graph 4.5 Qualifications obtained by participants

According to graph 4.5, all participants are fully qualified teachers. Two participants completed undergraduate qualifications in fields outside of education but later qualified as teachers by completing postgraduate certificates in education. Three participants have completed honours degrees in education.

The graphs display that participants have diverse characteristics in terms of teaching experience and qualifications obtained. This is of importance as the researcher sought to obtain responses from a diverse group of teachers in order to obtain different views on the topic being researched. The participants teach at different phases at the school giving a more overviewed reaction to the questions posed in the questionnaire and the focus group.

The principal's demographic information was collected during a semi-structured individual interview. She (Participant 11) has 25 years of educational education experience in various roles. Before embarking on the development of the school (a process that started in 2017), she was employed as a member of Umalusi's Evaluation and Accreditation Unit. Umalusi fulfils the role of an accreditation and quality assurance provider in the South

African education system. In this role, she gained first-hand experience of the practices employed by a myriad of schools, both private and public. This is evident from the following verbatim quote: P11 I: *“Having the opportunity to travel around the country and to see different private schools functioning, it led me to believe that there was room or space, to offer something different and to move away concisely from the traditional approach to education”*. This knowledge was supplemented with knowledge gained through extensive travel, both locally as well as abroad to gain insights into education, with a focus on the facilities employed in education.

## 4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.3.1 Data sources

Data sources are presented in Table 4.1 below. The table depicts which participant participated in which form of data collection in order to link extracts and references to information with the appropriate data source. Pseudonyms and codes are used to ensure anonymity.

Table 4.1 Participants and data sources

Participant	Data source 1	Data source 2
P1	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P2	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P3	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P4	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P5	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P6	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P7	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 1 (F1)
P8	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 2 (F2)
P9	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 2 (F2)
P10	Questionnaire (Q)	Focus group 2 (F2)
P11 (Principal)	Interview (I)	N/A

### **4.3.2 Themes**

The themes and sub-themes that were identified during the analysis of the data are presented in Table 4.2 above. The themes correspond with the themes identified in earlier phases of the research (Literature review in Chapter 2) but were enhanced and updated with emerging themes and subthemes that were uncovered during an analysis of the data.

Theme 1: Assessment adaptation

1. Defining assessment adaptation
2. Barriers to assessment/ assessment adaptation

Theme 2: Implementation of assessment adaptation

1. Role of the teachers
2. Role of the Principal
3. Role of support services
4. Role of the parent

Theme 3: Teacher's knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation

1. Defining inclusive education
2. Barriers to learning
3. Requirements to implement inclusive education & assessment adaptation

Theme 4: Teacher's attitudes toward assessment adaptation

1. Experiences of assessment adaptation
2. Provision of support
3. School's expectations from teachers

### **4.3.3 Presentation and discussion of the findings**

The findings collected were henceforth presented and discussed within the themes and subthemes as identified. Themes and subthemes were constantly revisited throughout the research process. Data sources are integrated into the presentation of findings. Various quotes are presented under each theme to display the views expressed by participants on each theme.

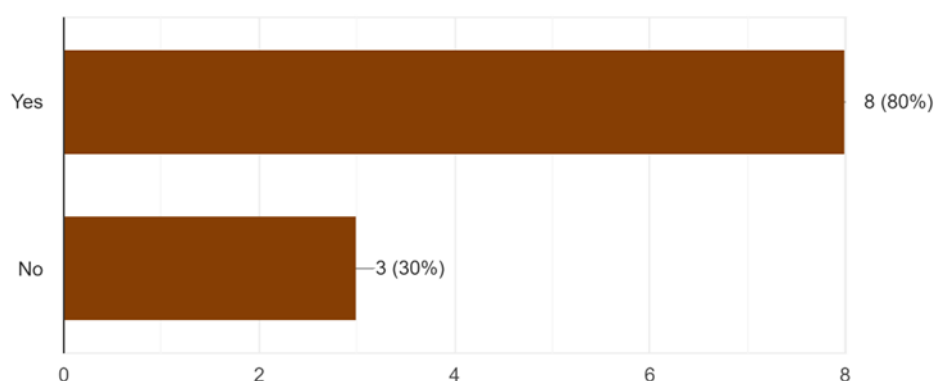


## THEME 1: ASSESSMENT ADAPTATIONS

As the study employed an interpretive paradigm, it was imperative to understand what participants view assessment adaptation to be i.e. the definition that participants attach to assessment. An exploratory question was included in the questionnaire to gauge whether participants have knowledge of assessment adaptation.

Have you ever heard of assessment adaptation?

10 responses



Graph 4.6 Knowledge of assessment adaptation

According to the graph above, only three participants indicated that they had never heard of assessment adaptation in the questionnaire.

### Subtheme 1.1 Defining assessment adaptation:

In their responses, participants seemed to have a sound knowledge of what assessment adaptation entails. However, participants generally provided examples of assessment adaptation rather than a definition of assessment adaptation. Some verbatim responses can be seen below:

P3 F1: *“My understanding would be that the assessment would be set up in various ways because at the school we claim that we focus on 3 main ways of learning and therefore we should have 3 main ways of assessing. The visual child would need to see it, whereas an auditory child may need someone to read it to him, whereas your kinaesthetic child may need to actively and physically do that activity or the task.”*

P3 F1: *“When I am testing X, today I might do it this way, tomorrow I might do it that way, and the next day I might do it another way, to ensure that every child has got*

*some form, or something has made a connection to that child when it comes to doing X."*

P3 F1: *"You can gauge their understanding of concepts taught through their play and through the activities they are doing."*

P4 F1: *"You are still getting them to do what you need them to do, but in a different way that is maybe more exciting, or accessible to them, in terms of maybe moving their body, helping them to regulate a bit more effectively, keeping their hands busy something like that."*

P8 F2: *"I could give one kid, well most of the class actually, 10 questions, they need to complete to see if they have understood the text. , then I have those who have slow processing or who have slow processing or who hate writing, are only going to answer 5, I don't need to force them to do all 10 questions to assess what it is that I am looking for."*

P10 F2: *"For Math, for example, some kids might prefer to work on a whiteboard, some kids might prefer to work ... if for example, we are doing regrouping, and we have vertical sums, and we need to do 6 plus 5 is 11, some of that can't but if I give them 11 loose blocks, they able to build a ten and have a one, so they can see it, but they can't physically write it down, so now they know the concept of regrouping."*

P11 I: *"In something as simple as the Rave-O program or the reading or the numeracy etc. where it is set at different levels or at different tasks and so forth but with the same concept in skill being reinforced."* (The Rave-O program is a literacy and reading program used at the school)

The use of technology within assessment adaptation was evident in the evolving nature of assessment adaptation in the classroom. It was evident that participants felt that the use of technology enabled them to assess learners better and to employ innovative assessment adaptation:

P3 F1 (While relating a story about a learner with selective mutism): *"She was at her therapist and we were on Skype and she didn't know that I was on the other side and I heard her read for the first time. She had confidence issues and would not say a word to anyone. It was about finding a different method to hear her reading."*

P3 F1: (While relating a story about another learner with selective mutism): *“Her dad would send me WhatsApp videos of her reading every afternoon and she had a YouTube channel because she obviously had this barrier about speaking in front of people that she didn’t know or who weren’t her close family but yet she had a YouTube channel where she would talk about the most random things to the whole entire world but I think it was because she was unaware of the fact that so many people are actually watching her.”*

P6 F1: *“So, if he’s able to make a movie or to make a soundtrack for me of his answers, he can do it verbally, but to put it on paper or on the iPad to type it, is very difficult for him.”*

P2 F1: *“The nice thing is we have the Speech assist on the iPad. I have used that in class a couple of times when I want to test comprehension and not their reading skills then I will let them copy it into their iPad, use speech assist and then the iPad reads it to them.”*

P9 F2: *“The iPad is amazing with dyslexia, the text to voice, there are apps where you can scan a page, if the textbook is not an e-book, and then select the text and then it will read it to the kids.”*

Chapter 3 presented details on the use of technology in assessment adaptation and how it is becoming increasingly popular. In some cases, technology is replacing traditional methods of assessment adaptation completely, while in others technology is used as an aide to enhance the effect of traditional methods of adaptation.

Participants’ views on the goals of assessment were also explored to determine whether participants could perceive a need for assessment adaptation derived from the process of assessment. Some goals ascribed to assessment are as follows:

P1 Q: *“To adjust the level of her teaching. To ascertain learner ability and the progress they will need to make.”*

P8 Q: *“To see where the child is in their journey of learning and to be able to know how to progress with their education. To know what they struggle with and what they excel in.”*

P10 Q: *“Identify a child’s individual needs, therefore understanding how to better assist the child and their learning.”*

P11 I: *“For me, it is a learning tool because it goes back to the growth mindset premise i.e. a child hasn’t required a skill or knowledge yet, they will and based on that I think it is a really critical tool for learning.”*

These responses evidenced that assessment was recognised as a part of the learning process, where insights derived in the assessment process are used to inform further learning and assessment tasks, including assessment adaptation.

Most participants originally defined assessment adaptation in terms of formal adaptations instead of informal adaptation. Participants could provide a list of formal assessment adaptation techniques (scribes, readers, facilitators, extra time allocation, separate venues, etc.). It was only after further probing that participants also noted informal assessment adaptation techniques. Participants thus generally displayed substantial knowledge of assessment adaptation, although most participants felt that they did not have adequate knowledge of adaptations. This is evidenced in the quotes below:

P3 F1: *“I want to provide children with individualised learning if necessary, but how much are we training teachers to deal with that?”*

P1 F1: *“Are we equipped to do it (assessment adaptation), do we have the necessary skills to actually do this?”*

P7 F1: *“Sometimes we are not equipped with all the knowledge we need to know.”*

Some participants, however, emphasised that assessment adaptation is not just a set of skills but rather an embedded approach that frames all their actions in the classroom. This aligns with literature consulted in the study (Hoover & Patton, 2005; Swart & Pettipher 2019; Nel, 2018). In addition, it was also evident that participants applied adaptation to both gifted learners as well as learners who experience barriers.

P2 F1: *“So, constantly we are assessing them in different ways. So, our step one is to find out what their learning style is, then we look at their files, we see what their pre-existing barriers and we are expected as educationalists to work from there.”*

P8 F2: *“You plan what you want them to achieve by the end of the year already, and then that is what you teach from, but you are not assessing in the way of tests, you are assessing in the way of when you are sitting with a focus group for Maths,*

*for example, you are writing in a book, and saying ok she is managing, she is struggling with number sense, this one can do this, I need to work on that with this one.”*

P4 F1: *“I think that there is no specific template you can ever follow with any sort of children.”*

P11 I: *“So it is the same curriculum per se but the approach is differentiated as we also discussed with accelerated reteach programs as well as with the learning styles that is looking at their different strengths or at the areas that they need support in.”*

From the responses provided, it was evident that participants had a thorough grasp of assessment adaptation, despite their initial responses which stated that some of the participants had never heard of the concept. The same insights were reiterated in the fact that most participants expressed the view that they did not have adequate knowledge of assessment adaptation despite being able to site countless examples of assessment adaptation and relating experiences that they have had in relation to assessment adaptation.

### **Subtheme 1.2 Barriers to assessment/ assessment adaptation**

Participants were asked to relate their understanding of barriers to assessment, after initially gathering information on their understanding of barriers to learning. Participants made the connection that barriers to assessment are any factor that can hinder the successful implementation or conduct of assessment. A notable insight was presented by P7 F1, who noted that *“barriers to assessment can come from both the child and from the teacher”*. A variety of barriers were discussed in both focus sessions, including anxiety.

P1 F1: *“As soon as we call it an assessment, that the kids go blank and again this is why we have these concessions is that now I need to do an oral test alone or this child needs to be alone doing this assessment because of this anxiety, so there are a lot of parts to it in the sense that the barriers can be again emotional or the academic barriers.”*

P4 F1: *“Concentration and the focus that they are able to give at that time.”*

From the following quotes, it is clear that the curriculum structure was identified as one of the biggest barriers to assessment in both focus group discussions.

P1 F1: *“One of the biggest barriers to assessment is indeed your curriculum and the freedom that we have, so if you follow a curriculum where you have complete freedom as a teacher that will enable you to assess in a freer way.”*

P3 F1: *“I think at the school we feel like we have a lot of \*learners with barriers to learning in our school. But I don’t think any other normal government school isn’t feeling it either, except they are forced into a different way of teaching because of class sizes and those kids do get left behind or get classed as naughty or have meltdowns and it is very difficult, but again there needs to be more support.”*

\*Description amended to use inclusive vocabulary

P8 F2: *“The way assessment is to be done, needs to be completely relooked, because ideally in a social realm, you are trying to mainstream children so that they get treated the same as everyone else, but then when it comes to assessment, we are not treating them the same anymore and it sends a confusing message.”*

P8 F2: *“I am ok with you finishing 3 today, and tomorrow and the day afterwards but ultimately for this one assessment you have to hit all 10 and this is where the disconnect comes in passed the same level, all of them, but I have not been pushing you to reach the same level all the same time, I don’t think that is a good thing.”*

The views that were expressed indicated a link between barriers to assessment and assessment adaptation. Participants indicated that assessment adaptation should be informed by barriers to assessment and should, in turn, aim to eliminate barriers to assessment. This, in turn, led to an acknowledgement that barriers to assessment would inevitably also be barriers to assessment adaptation and vice versa as expressed by participant 1:

P11 I: *“It is called authentic assessment, it is continuous, it is accurate because it is an accurate or true reflection of the child’s ability in the terms of mastering of knowledge and skills and it is obviously used in a diagnostic form to inform the adaptation of the program according to the needs that weren’t necessarily met.”*

In the following quotes, the participants expressed that they felt that the elimination of these barriers would require an assessment and adjustment of teaching practices, focusing primarily on assessment practices.

P1 F1: *“We are moving away from tradition, we are moving away from paper, that there are different ways of assessing and that is a barrier is our curriculum. If we are following an assessment-based curriculum obviously there is going to be a problem. Therefore, we need to create a curriculum that gives us the freedom to say we are dropping this.”*

## **THEME 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT ADAPTATIONS**

For assessment adaptations to be successful, the support of various key stakeholders is important. They need to understand the assessment adaptation and what it entails to implement it. In this theme, the role of the teacher, principal, support services and the parent are discussed.

### **Subtheme 2.1 The role of the teachers**

A teacher is someone that helps learners to learn new knowledge and acquire new skills. They help children understand the context of the work and acquire valuable insights for future endeavors. Teachers not only help with the academic side of a child’s development but also with the emotional and social skills a learner needs to learn. Teachers also play a supportive role in the various needs that learners might have and therefore play a vital role in the implementation of assessment adaptations. With the move towards an inclusive education system, “teachers play a crucial and central role in ensuring the effective implementation of inclusive education” (Nel, Nel, & Hugo, Inclusive education: An introduction, 2016, p. 29). Participant 6 in this research have confirmed this statement:

P6 F1: *“I feel that inclusive education is becoming more and more relevant in our schools, and especially at the moment I feel we should be getting more training on this.”*

The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support policy (DoE, 2014) (SIAS), explains that teachers play an immense role in the implementations of assessments and in itself the adaptations of assessments. Mahlo (2016) reaffirms this by stating that “the SIAS (DoE, 2014) procedure requires teachers to have specific knowledge and skills to enable them to identify and help learners who experience barriers to learning in their classes” (p. 8) and add that “all teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach, should be able to identify learners’ level of education and support their learning” (Mahlo, 2016, p. 8). Participant 3 explains it as follows:

P3 F1: *“The teachers are making it work. The one teacher went on sign language training just so that he could communicate with a student in his class, and that was a mainstream government school in Europe.”*

Although teachers are expected to be inclusive in their teaching methodologies and be able to support learners with various needs, participants felt that they lack the necessary training to support learners with various needs:

P8 F2: *“They are trained as general mainstream teachers, who are now being forced, not that they are not unwilling, but they feel ill-equipped, to embrace and to assist children who have a huge range of needs and that is not really realistic.”*

P 9 F2: *“What I find now, especially working at the school I am at, a lot of us have got quite a number of kids with challenges and like you guys said, we are not equipped. I have the experience, I have worked in a remedial school, so I have a little more experience, but it does not mean I am equipped for it. I have never been trained as a reader or a scribe, but I do it.”*

P 7 F 1: *“I think that with dealing with all barriers, personally, I am struggling with that. Making sure that the kids who don’t have barriers are also getting my attention.”*

P4 F1: *“Finding enough training and that and finding the time for teachers to be trained and equipping us with the right skills, regardless of training or not. I understand that there is not a lot of access to training but also there are ways to move around that.”*



P6 F1: *“May I ask, do you think, in your opinion, that once we have completed our teacher training, whether we have had some extra training in there for special needs, which we generally had at my age level, that as teachers we should continue that.”*

The role of the teacher also goes beyond the implementation of assessment adaptation as children might have a facilitator in the class. Teachers, such as participant 9, must adapt to having an extra adult in the class and include them in the learning and assessment process.

P9 F2: *“I also have a child in my class who has a facilitator, so I have to make sure she knows if the work she is busy with is something I am going to use as an assessment. So, I have to make sure she is not giving him the answers, so it is a matter of her just reading it for him.”*

The role of the teacher could also be one of a co-teacher, where they are an expert in a certain subject. Having a co-teacher in the class allows teachers to focus on learners that might require more individual support. According to participants 9 and 11, co-teaching also brings different strengths to the class:

P9 F2: *“So, there are 3 grade 2 classes. The three of us are all really good, experienced teachers, but we are all still very different. We all have different strengths in our teaching, my strength is Maths, the other teacher’s strength is English,..., but with me when it comes to Math, I know exactly what I am looking for in whatever concept I am teaching, where the teacher with the strength of English she will know exactly what she is looking for, where I might be weaker on that point, so that goes back to a barrier in assessments, even though the three of us are pretty much on the same page, and we know what we are doing, we know where we are going, the way that we present an assessment per se, to our class, is all different.”*

P11 I: *“It is not happening in all subjects, it is resource dependent, human resources. It is because we have the opportunity to utilise Mrs Purple, she is a*

*qualified teacher in that respect. Where you are going to see more of this coming through, I believe which is our original vision is with the learnership program, so taking a person like Ms Gold and not just for the junior prep but extending it up into the senior prep. So, you are taking the same concept of co-teaching in and obviously they see good practice being modelled, they are getting the opportunity to co-teach as well, and then you are individualizing the attention. It is reciprocal, it is enriching their knowledge and experience and in so doing with the students, you are taking students that are studying it, but you have the master facilitator or the master teacher to guide the whole process."*

A question was asked to establish if the participants knew what the process was to get assessment adaptations and their role during the process. They answered:

*P8 F1: "I know a little bit about the process. So, I know we have to do observations and you get in contact with whoever they get approved or disapproved of and then it can be implemented in the classroom if you are going a formal type of concession route."*

*P9 F2: "No, I don't know if there is a process. Especially us teachers who are experienced, we just do it without knowing what the process is."*

Although the participants focused on whether they feel equipped to implement assessment adaptation, their roles in implementing assessment adaptation as well as their role in the process to get assessment adaptations approved, the focus was also placed on the important role of collaboration between the relevant stakeholders as expressed by the following participants:

*P1 F1: "We need to get our parents on board and go away from the traditional way."*

*P1 F1: "We need to educate all parties involved in education."*

*P1 F1: "We are not only redesigning our curriculum and our kids we are redesigning our teachers as well as our parents as they are involved in this process and saying you need to trust us as an educator."*

P3 F1: *"We not only need to educate the parents and teachers but the school as well"*

Frequent communication with parents and experts in the field is a key to the successful understanding of a barrier to learning and by implication assessment adaptations.

## **Subtheme 2.2 Role of the Principal**

The Principal of a school is the leader of the school as s/he provides leadership to other management staff members, staff, learners, and parents. They provide guidance and insights into various aspects of school life. The Principal also makes strategic decisions on the curriculum, staffing and general practices employed at the school. The principal of the school expressed how she felt, saying that it is the duty of the principal to educate him/herself on developments in education and practices employed by other schools.

P 11 I: *"I had the opportunity to visit New Zealand for example and their education system there which is brilliant."*

P 11 I: *"I researched overseas. And, obviously, as we all know Finland in particular and so it really does reference both their builds of certain schools and their approach, etc., which has been commented on before by different people that I have met with."*

At the school that was chosen for the case study, the Principal also plays the role of the founder, as the school is based on her ideas (paradigm) and methodologies.

P11 I: *"You might have a visionary or a progressive head but as I alluded to my example personally it wasn't necessary always transferred to the staff and also the vision of the founder, you always have to be cognisant of that."*

P 11 I: *"Well, what I did not expand upon, was the fact that the school was founded because it was a recognition that each child is different."*

The School Principal is also responsible to drive progress to ensure that the school takes on new ideas and makes them happen. At this school, the Principal had some ideas as to how to support learners even more in the classroom.

The data collected showed that the school employs various inclusive principles in its teaching, evidenced by the fact that various learners with learning barriers are enrolled at the school. When the Principal was asked if adaptations are implemented, she answered:

P 11 I: *"It is teacher dependent I realised. The school is still a work in progress, some teachers in Afrikaans, for example, are quite keen."*

It is thus evident that she felt that assessment adaptation is the responsibility of the relevant teacher. However, the participants felt that:

P3 F1: *"We cannot just say we are redesigning education; we actually need to live it and it needs to come from everybody, all parties, management, teachers, parents, students."*

P 2 F1: *"A lot of schools want to be inclusive schools but you also need to have the support system available so it might not just be in the classroom with facilitators and whatever but there actually needs to be on campus support systems like therapists, nurses, whatever you need, whatever the child needs, if you are going to be a proper inclusive school you need to have that available on campus."*

The principal was clear on her roles and responsibilities in creating an environment that is conducive to the implementation of inclusive education and assessment adaptations. A testimony to the fact that inclusive education holds benefits to all stakeholders in education could be seen in her motivation to implement inclusive education practices, where she recognized that inclusion is beneficial to children but also makes business sense.

P11 I: *"We wanted to make private schooling relatively accessible to more students and especially our particular approach and B in terms of the model and the vision and we literally started on the journey and a year later we've built it and we are on track. I would not say we are there at all, but we are."*

P11 I: *"If you look at economics, you can achieve it long term with that, long term rollout it will work out but at the moment we have pockets that are in progress now."*

### **Subtheme 2.3 Role of support services**

Various support services are a key success to support learners that experience barriers to learning at school. Support services could include Psychologists, Counsellors, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers, Nurses and Learning Support teachers. The school at which the study was conducted employs a music therapist, two occupational therapists and two speech therapists to deliver support services at the school. In addition, the school has referral systems in place to refer to learners who would benefit from the provision of support services not currently offered by the school, to relevant professionals.

The principal spoke about the support services that are offered at the school but none of the participants mentioned the support services staff that help them with the learners that experience barriers to learning or assessment adaptations.

P 11 I: *"We have got an integrated therapy centre working on the premise that utilises the same environment, I'm talking about OT and Speech and Language Therapists. We currently have two OTs, and the two Speech and Language Therapists, which shows the need. I am quite interested how quickly it grew and we have a music therapist, and we have a remedial therapist. So, it is quite comprehensive. We do not have a school counsellor yet, but with the advent of a High School, it is something that we would look at, with the guidance counsellor."*

P 11 I: *"I was speaking to the remedial therapist and what she does now, she does the therapy sometimes in the actual environment in the classroom."*

One participant mentioned that it is important to have support services at a school.

P2 F1: *"A lot of schools want to be inclusive schools but you also need to have the support system available so it might not just be in the classroom with facilitators and whatever but there actually needs to be on campus support systems like therapists, nurses, whatever you need, whatever the child needs if you are going to be a proper inclusive school you need to have that available on campus."*

Although the study focuses on the experiences and roles of teachers relating to assessment adaptation, it must be recognised that the roles of teachers often overlap with those of support services, where teachers are required to collaborate with support service staff and often act as case managers in order to provide learners with appropriate support.

### **Subtheme 2.4 Role of the parent**

The role of the parent is key in management of learners with learning barriers in the school system. Parents are often the case manager of their own child, by giving information from the school to the professional and vice versa. Therefore, parents often have a lot of information about their child but are not sure how this must be implemented in school. Parents and teachers should have open communication levels in order to make the best decisions for the specific child.

Many participants felt that buy-in from the parents is a key element for successful implementation from assessment adaptation and differentiation.

P1 F1: *“We need to get our parents on board and go away from the traditional way that we need to show that paper, and we need to get our parents ready. And if we are redesigning education, we are not only redesigning our curriculum and our kids we are redesigning our teachers as well as our parents as they are involved in this process and saying you need to trust us as an educator, I cannot show you a test but I actually know what is happening in my classroom because I have continuous assessment, more than actually, the parent has.”*

Participants expressed that they felt that the parent could, however, also have a negative influence on the ability of a child. They felt that parents should maintain discipline and work collaboratively with teachers and support service staff to pursue the best interests of the child, as seen in the quotes below:

P 10 F2: *“Children who do have difficulties but are able, but with the anxiety from the parents, and the anxiety the parents put on their teacher is lessening their performance.”*

P10 F2 (while relating an experience involving a learner and his parents): *“But he also manipulated his parents quite significantly. His parents did mollycoddle and-*

*how are you feeling today, not your fault you couldn't do this, he took advantage of the system a little bit, to the point where at a parent meeting I was just yelled at, we had all the accommodations in place for this child, there were trampolines and he was allowed to walk around and basically run the show and he was really such a smart kid, but because there was so much of this, from mom, hey my boy you can't do this, and dad is the teacher doing this to you, he ended up just disrupting the whole classroom."*

In defining the roles of the various stakeholders (teachers, principals, support service staff and parents), it is recognized that the implementation of inclusive education, the elimination of barriers to learning and the implementation of assessment adaptation requires a collaborative effort. The relevant stakeholders must pursue a common objective in order to guarantee success.

### **THEME 3: TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT ADAPTATION:**

Under this theme, both theoretical, as well as practical data, were collected. Respondents expressed their understanding of inclusive education and barriers to learning and detailed what they think would be required to implement both inclusive education and assessment adaptation successfully.

#### **Subtheme 3.1 Defining inclusive education:**

Participants shared various views on inclusive education. It was evident that teachers had varying attitudes toward the desirability of an inclusive education system and the definition of an inclusive education system. It is significant to note that where some participants focused on inclusion based on ability, others included socio-economic, cultural, and racial aspects in their definitions.

P1 Q: *"To include learners who need particular support in a mainstream classroom."*

P2 Q: *"All students are welcome for enrolment, regardless of their different neuro-intelligences and neuro-diversities."*

P5 Q: *"Including all abilities. Everyone can learn just the pace or content may be different."*

P10 Q: *"Inclusive education means that mainstream school adjust their facilities and adapt, to assist students with special needs. A child does not have a barrier to*

*learning, the environment creates barriers i.e. if a child has a wheelchair and the school does not have a wheelchair ramp, the school environment is creating a barrier towards the child. Therefore, inclusive education means: Schools and teachers need to adapt their environment/teaching to accommodate for learners needs.”*

P9 Q: *“Inclusive education is finding ways to break barriers for all learners. Finding ways to accommodate each learner’s learning needs. Creating an environment that is diverse and a multiform of assessment opportunities learning activities all based on various levels, styles of learning and equipping each child with emotional support at the same time.”*

P8 Q: *“Including children with barriers to learning and catering for all learning styles, walks of life, culture, etc.”*

P4 F1: *“I think it is also important to mention because we are in South Africa that inclusive education also affords children the opportunity with whatever background, religion or race and to be included and not be prejudiced against that, especially considering that we have people from all of walks of life and religion and cultures in South Africa, so for me, that is also really important instead of just actual physical barriers to learning.”*

It was clear that participants defined inclusive education in terms of acknowledging the existence of barriers to learning and acknowledging that these barriers need to be eliminated to ensure that education is equitable and that access to education can be enjoyed by all.

### **Subtheme 3.2 Defining barriers to learning**

Participants identified several barriers being neurological, physical, emotional, academic, social, and economic barriers. P3 shared that barriers to learning are viewed through the social model of thinking instead of the medical model with the following statement:

P3 F1: *“My understanding is that a child does not have a barrier to learning, that the environment around them creates barriers. If a child is in a wheelchair the school should be providing wheelchair access. If they don’t then the child now has a barrier, but it is not from the child’s side it is from the school environment side*



*because the school should have facilities available for that child, so it is all about the environment.”*

Where the initial definitions of inclusive education focused mainly on narrow definitions of inclusion, participants focused extensively on social and economic barriers in their definitions.

P10 F2: *“Again, I also think it is a very broad topic and I also think that as .... barriers to learning with challenges like ADHD or dyslexia etcetera, but I think what we are not focusing on enough, is barriers to learning that include children who have sick parents, which include children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, that could even include a typical mainstream child who maybe has a sibling with learning difficulties and then the way they are acting out in the classroom, makes them ... but actually, they are just needing some attention because their sibling is getting all of it. I think all of us have been in education long enough to understand what it means but for me, in particular, it is more of a focus on the emotional barriers to learning rather than the cognitive ones.”*

P8 F2: *“There is social, there is economical, there’s health, there’s family background and then there is, of course, the actual learning barriers of neurodiversity and all of those things are barriers to learning.”*

P5 F1: *“What some people also don’t consider is a financial barrier to learning. The kids that we deal with currently don’t really have that kind of barrier, but in some ways, they do because they are paying so much in terms of fees, they can’t afford the therapies.”*

This shows a thorough understanding of barriers to learning and proves that teachers consider a variety of barriers in their classroom and adapt their teaching practices, including assessment practices, to eliminate these barriers.

### **Subtheme 3.3 Requirements to implement inclusive education and assessment adaptation**

Teachers expressed their views on the relevant requirements to implement an inclusive education system, which includes the practice of assessment adaptation. It was emphasised that the school presents a unique case study in the implementation of these

practices as P11 I states that *“I think once a school is established it is very difficult to change direction for different reasons, a key factor would be the staff component because you get your adopters, and you get your resistors, and the normal sort of change management agents and the lack thereof and that definitely impacts on trying to change one’s vision”*. This statement emphasises that there is a large reliance on teachers to implement assessment adaptation in the absence of appropriate guidelines to implement adaptation. Despite this, the school has chosen to implement these practices from the start as choosing to only do so later would be difficult.

Teachers articulated a variety of requirements to implement assessment adaptation, focusing firstly on the knowledge required:

P3 F1: *“Are teachers prepared for inclusive education, are teachers qualified for inclusive education, are teachers given professional development around it, because it is all good and well to say we need to take all these children in, and we need to accommodate them, but how much training, to be fair, are all teachers getting, to assist these children?”*

P8 F1: *“I have lots of experience with barriers but not enough training to deal with the barriers.”*

Knowledge of inclusive education and assessment adaptation was linked to resource allocation. P4 F1 expressed that it is a struggle to find *“enough training and finding the time for teachers to be trained and equipping us with the right skills”*. In addition to the requirement to have resources to enable teacher training, views were also expressed regarding the need to have adequate staffing in order to enable assessment adaptation.

P6 F1: *“I think it is important that we take note of the number of children that have got barriers to learning and we have people like facilitators inside our classrooms to help us, because to manage the whole group and all the different little things that are going on, on our own, as a teacher, is incredibly difficult.”*

P1 F1: *“We might not even know that there is someone who needs extra time. We need to be mindful then as teachers to have our test as a 30-minute test and the extra timer has the extra time.”*

P9 F1: *“We want to help the kids who are struggling but we also what to challenge the kids who are needing extension and need that extra and what ends up*

*happening is we don't do that. The kids with challenges take up more time than the administrators and the managers of the school think they do or expect that they do."*

*P8 F2: "They have TA's (teacher assistants) and if you are really going to do mainstream education properly, you can't be one educator to twenty-five learners, that is not going to address barriers of learning because it takes two people because you have to at some point separate that class to give that individualized attention, to do focus groups, and until South Africa actually realizes that we cannot be like Finland unless we have TA's and we cannot be like China who has TA's, you just don't see them in those films, so, therefore, they are never presented in the training, we won't be able to help the children in the way we want to."*

*P11 I: "To be honest, it (assessment adaptation) is not happening in all subjects, it is resource dependent, human resources."*

Further to the human resources that are needed to implement both inclusive education and assessment adaptation, both teachers, as well as the principal, emphasised that the teaching environment needs to enable inclusive education practices. This applies both to the building that houses the school as well as the space inside the classroom and the furniture utilised. Participants verbalised it as follows:

*P11 I: "It (assessment adaptation) has to be a complete change both physically in terms of the architecture and the interior structure of the school, the physical structure of the school as well as the pedagogical change as well. And that type of change you had to do from scratch."*

*P4 F1: "It is easier for us to negotiate and handle because we have a more flexible and informal learning space. I don't always find the same problems as other teachers just because it is easier for me to be able to assess in different ways."*

*P3 F1: "Just the fact that we have tables and chairs. We say we have flexible learning spaces but in actual fact, I do not think we do. A flexible classroom would be a classroom that has standing tables, areas where children can sit on the mat, standardized normal tables and allow students to sit where they feel comfortable so when we are doing a task everybody is in a position that they feel comfortable in."*

In the quotes below teachers expressed that the curriculum utilised in a school can either enable assessment adaptation or prohibit it. They felt that the curriculum needs to allow

enough freedom for adaptation, while the curriculum taught must align to assessment standards and reporting standards.

P3 F1: *"Could it possibly be that the curriculum that you are teaching is lending itself to better assessment than other curriculums?"*

P1 F1: *"One of the biggest barriers to assessment is indeed your curriculum and the freedom that we have, so if you follow a curriculum where you have complete freedom as a teacher that will enable you to assess in a freer way."*

P1 F1: *"Our curriculum needs to be so flexible that we can work on different assessment styles."*

P1 F1: *"They have a choice of 3 things to do, in the end, it is either creating a video with their self, telling me what they have learned, or they have a research essay, I do teach Grade 7's so it is a little bit different, but they have 3 formats or 3 platforms they can hand in their assessment, and I am saying it out aloud, I do not care what CAPS says, it is putting the assessment mark on the CAPS form, how we get there is none of their business."* (The school uses a customised curriculum that encompasses the principles contained in the CAPS curriculum. The curriculum is evaluated to ensure that the outcomes articulated in CAPS are encompassed in its curriculum)

P3 F1: *"A different curriculum may lend itself better than another curriculum to different assessments."*

P3 F1: *"If you don't want to do paper assessments then you need to allow teachers to then show you how we are assessing in different ways without the expectation of having a paper document going, this is this evidence. We can show evidence in various ways if you give us the opportunity to."*

P10 F2: *"Our assessment criteria and the curriculum that we are teaching are not aligned. For example, we are teaching a Singapore curriculum but we are assessing according to CAPS, and now what I am struggling with is, am I assessing learners according to the spiral curriculum, that is CAPS, or am I meant to assess them on mastery, which is the way the Singapore curriculum runs? And if we were to assess properly it would be according to mastery but then what is going to come across negatively as a school."*

P8 F2: *"If there is going to be differentiated learning, there has to be differentiated reporting as well."*

Participants displayed a thorough understanding of inclusive education and barriers to learning. Although participants thus seem to have a sound theoretical knowledge of inclusive education, their opinions on the desirability of an inclusive education system were divided. However, several prerequisites were listed, that had to be prevalent for assessment adaptation to be implemented. These prerequisites included extensive teacher training, adequate resource allocation, a flexible and fit-for-purpose structure of the learning environment and a flexible curriculum.

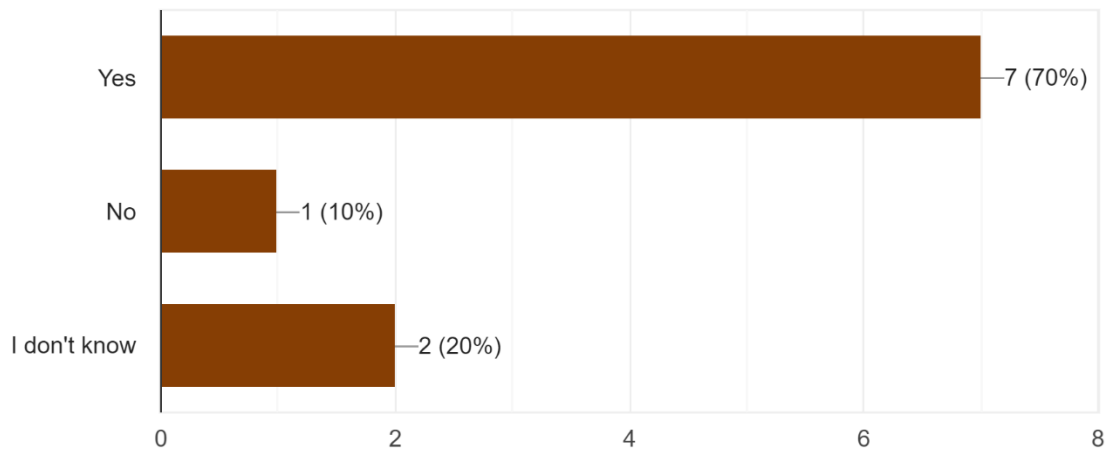
## **THEME 4: TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD ASSESSMENT ADAPTATIONS**

### **Subtheme 4.1 Experiences of assessment adaptations**

The National Protocol on Assessment defines assessment as “a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners” (Nel, Nel, & Lebeloane, 2017, p. 60). Teachers are familiar with the concept of assessment and have vast experience in it as they must conduct assessments weekly. Assessment adaptations are explained by Anderson, Barkhuizen, Bothma and Nel (2018) as a “necessary and appropriate modification of, and adjustment to, the environment, assessment format and/or curriculum format” (p. 2). The main question of this thesis: What familiarity does private primary school teachers have of assessment adaptation is unpacked below. It is theorised that teachers that have had positive experiences in implementing assessment adaptation are more likely to implement assessment adaptation in the future.

An exploratory question (Have you successfully applied assessment adaptation in your classroom?) was posed to participants in the questionnaire. The results can be seen below:

10 responses



Graph 4. 7 - Application of assessment adaptation

From the results, it was evident that many participants felt that they had successfully applied assessment adaptation. This needs to be read in the context where the school does not have a formal process in place to identify learners who require assessment adaptations. Leading from this, participants also detailed their experiences of assessment adaptation in the Focus Groups where most participants related positive experiences of assessment adaptation.

P2 F1: *"If I am trying to assess him on a comprehension and I am expecting him to write it on paper he will fail, but if I look at that as a barrier for him, and I test him verbally, he will pass with flying colours."*

P4 F1: *"Give her something visual, give her writing, give her reading, you can't believe what this child can do. It was a good turning point for me, that I thought to myself, I cannot be so judgmental as well because I just judged her based on that one thing. I am seeing that If I give her something to look at or instructions visually, or movement or something like that, she is able to do it 100%. Now I have to shift my whole thinking and perspective towards her, as I have to do it with my body and not my mouth with her. So that has been a little bit tricky, but a good learning experience."*

P2 F1: *"It gives the parent a better understanding of how their child is learning but it also keeps track of the child's progress, so the next teacher or the next school can see that this child cannot write it but they are able to read, or they are able to*

*verbally give you an amazing story, so they are still meeting the criteria but in a different way.”*

P6 F1: *“It was a regular thing that they would come out of the class and go to different venues for their different needs which I found very impressive.”*

P4 F1: *“I think in Pre-Prep we are always applying assessment adaptations and you kind of don’t even realize that you are doing it with the kid who needs something extra in his hands or the kid who needs help to regulate his body more, or the kid who needs to stand instead of sit. I don’t think about it in the sense of oh I am assessing you now, I need to give you this to help you think better, I am just, I think you need this to be more successful in your day and get through the day. Maybe it comes a bit more naturally for us in the pre-school.”*

P3 F1: *“It feels like it is more natural, and I think it all has to do with the space and the curriculum that the children are in.”*

P8 F2: *“I have never had to work with Asperger’s children before, high functioning, and I find that to be incredibly rewarding actually.”*

P9 F2: *“I don’t know individual instructions or quest he is doing better with the facilitator, if she wasn’t there it would be checking the class, checking on him so it changed the game a bit, he is doing much better with the waiting for him to answer. So, it has changed the game a bit. He is doing much better with the facilitator in place.”*

P9 F2: *“My one child who has the facilitator, I would see that as his concession, so I think it has been successful, he is more confident in class, he has had less outbursts, than at the beginning of the year, ... assessments, I actually had a message today, to say should he be getting his marks, ja he should be.”*

P11 I: *“It [assessment adaptation] is actually interesting, and it is working really well.”*

There were, however, some participants that relayed negative experiences originating from the implementation of assessment adaptation.

P6 F1: *“I find it more tricky to be able to create that inclusive space and to be able to teach in all the different ways for all the different children who are needing different versions of the material in order to access it for themselves properly.”*



P7 F2: *"I think that with dealing with all the barriers, personally, I am struggling with that. Making sure that the kids who do not have barriers are also getting my attention. giving all the attention to those who need the extra attention, let us not forget about those who kind of keep on going because they are capable too, they also deserve your attention."*

P5 F1: *"If you are taking in a child with such a massive barrier, that it stops other children from learning as well, that is a problem for me."*

P6 F1: *"I think it is important that we take note of the number of children that have got barriers to learning and we have people like facilitators inside our classrooms to help us, because to manage the whole group and all the different little things that are going on, on our own, as a teacher, is incredibly difficult."*

P3 F1: *"We are expected to know all the children's learning styles and accommodate that, but sometimes it is just humanly impossible."*

P9 F2: *"I don't think that is being very inclusive at all, because we are not really putting the parameters in place that help these kind of children, so I feel like the school systems are saying inclusive education - everyone should be enrolled and then we enrol children in mainstream schools, that are not really able to cope, then without really putting the things in place that we are really able to help them."*

P8 F2: *"You are disadvantaging the mainstream child or you are disadvantaging the child with the neurodiversity because we don't have the skills to cope with them, not every teacher is trained for remedial, and we should be if we are going to be main schooling everyone."*

P9 F2: *"We want to help the kids who are struggling but we also what to challenge the kids who are needing extension and need that extra and what ends up happening is we do not do that. The kids with challenges take up more time than the administrators and the managers of the school think they do or expect that they do."*

P8 F2: *"This leads to severe teacher anxiety because ultimately the heart of the teacher wants to nurture every individual and when they are not equipped with the assistance that they need; they cannot address those barriers."*

P8 F2: *"I have tried to implement adaptations, but I do not feel I have been successful as I could be. I have tried them, and the children have improved, but I think there are better ways."*



It is noted that most negative responses are linked to specific circumstances. Most notably, negative experiences occur in circumstances where the requirements to implement assessment adaptation (as detailed in Theme 3) are not met. It is also clear that the implementation of assessment adaptation requires substantial effort from teachers. P8 summarised this with her statement:

P8 F2: *"It is very hard when it comes to implementation and administration of assessment adaptations. There is a lot of room for improvement, it needs to be looked at very carefully but also realistically, what can this school achieve with the manpower they have, and what is their actual goal in the end. And ultimately one must remember what the purpose of schools is and the role they play in society and preparing children for the real world as we call it."*

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was used to present and discuss the research findings under various themes and subthemes that were identified after a process of thematic content analysis. Participants provided wide-ranging information on topics related to assessment adaptation within an inclusive education system. The data gathered provided valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of teachers relating to assessment adaptation. These insights will be unpacked and interpreted in Chapter 5.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this interpretive qualitative research was to gain an understanding of the familiarity teachers in private schools have regarding assessment adaptation within an inclusive education system. In order to seek answers to the research question, this chapter will focus on a discussion of the research findings.

The findings from this qualitative interpretive case study that are presented in this chapter were informed by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model. The use of this model required the researcher to account for systems and personal characteristics that could inform the responses of participants or be informed by the responses of participants. Educational Assessment Theory was used as the conceptual framework to inform the study. Internationally, education systems have shifted towards inclusive education, as discussed in Chapter 2. As an outflow of this movement, assessment practices also had to be adapted. The most notable shift in assessment has been a shift in focus from summative to formative assessment. It is with the theoretical and conceptual framework as backdrops that the research findings were interpreted.

In addition to presenting insights and findings that were derived from the study, this chapter will also present details regarding implications and recommendations that flow from the findings.

### **5.2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

Assessment adaptations are integral to the success of an inclusive education system (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2018; Nel, 2015). This is because the principles of inclusivity should not only apply to the curriculum but also assessment. Learners who experience

barriers to learning will inevitably require assessment adaptation as these barriers affect performance in assessment tasks, which form an integral part of the learning process. As a result, these learners require additional support and amended practices during assessment to allow learners to display their competencies. The adaptations introduced should serve to minimise the effects of barriers to learning to display their knowledge without affording learners who receive these adaptations with an undue advantage over their peers (Nel, Nel & Lebeloane, 2017). This means that teachers, who are responsible for the implementation of assessment adaptation, need to be knowledgeable on principles of inclusive education, barriers to learning, the effect of barriers to learning/ assessment on assessment performance, and measures that can be taken to address these effects. The findings presented in Chapter 4, shows that participants generally displayed sound theoretical knowledge on these matters. Participants, however, felt that they did not have adequate practical knowledge of these topics, especially relating to practices that can be taken to address the effects of barriers to learning. The findings will be interpreted under the themes used to present the findings of this research.

The subthemes will be merged to form a holistic picture of the theme explored.

### **5.2.1 Assessment adaptation**

Despite initial responses which noted that not all participants had heard of assessment adaptation, participants displayed substantial knowledge of assessment adaptation. When asked to define assessment adaptation, participants provided examples of adaptations rather than a definition. This could be an indication that although the participants in the study were uncertain of their knowledge pertaining to assessment adaptation, they generally had practical knowledge on the topic. In addition, participants focused mostly on formal assessment adaptations rather than informal adaptation practices that they employed in the classroom. This can be attributed to the focus of literature on formal assessment adaptation while adaptation in informal settings is less prominent in literature and training material. Having said this, participants could provide lists of adaptations and details on learners that received or would be able to receive these adaptations. It is thus clear that participants understand what assessment adaptations entail and have knowledge of which types of learners could require assessment adaptation.

It was notable that participants used a social model in which assessment adaptations were framed (where barriers to learning/ assessment are viewed as external to the learner). This means that assessment adaptation was not associated with only learners with special educational needs (LSEN). Teachers acknowledged that all learners regardless of their level of achievement in assessments could qualify for assessment adaptations if the learner's achievements did not reflect his/ her true potential.

A further insight is that teachers provided extensive examples of the use of technology in assessment adaptation. According to the findings, technology enables teachers to allow learners to express themselves using different media. It is thus clear that teachers acknowledge that technology can be a significant enabler in education and particularly in the implementation of assessment adaptation. It was further noted that the implementation and practice of assessment requires a collaborative effort on the parts of teachers, the principal, educational support services and the parents of learners. The roles of these various role players will be discussed in the next section.

### **5.2.2 Role players in the implementation of assessment adaptation**

Teachers play a critical role in the implementation of assessment adaptation. Their role encompasses various facets where they are either playing a lead or a supporting role in implementation. Firstly, teachers are responsible for practising assessment adaptation within their classrooms (Motitswe & Taole, 2016; Mahlo, 2016). Secondly, teachers engage in supporting activities within their schools. This could take on various forms, including co-teaching, coaching, and mentoring. Thirdly, teachers are collaborators (Walton et al., 2009; Mahlo & Condry, 2016). This requires teachers to participate in the provision of support for learners by collaborating with specialists of various disciplines (Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, etc.). Teachers can also be required to fulfil the role of a case manager in this process. Lastly, teachers are required to submit applications for the formal allocation of assessment adaptations. The last facet is of particular importance, as it appears that participants were not aware of the requirements and processes to be followed to request formal assessment adaptations for learners within the SIAS policy. The school at which the study was conducted benchmarks its curriculum against CAPS criteria and participates in examinations that are set by the DoBE. As such, any formal assessment adaptations that

are implemented at the school should follow the provisions detailed by the DoBE, most notably the SIAS document.

The role of the principal pertaining to assessment adaptations is to provide leadership, to make strategic decisions regarding the implementation of assessment adaptations and to have adequate knowledge of adaptations. This knowledge of adaptations needs to be transferred to teachers through formal and informal training. This further implies that the principal needs to be knowledgeable on curricula and trends in education to enable strategic decision making regarding the implementation of assessment adaptations and policies about assessment adaptation. However, it must be noted that the principal is of the opinion that the implementation of assessment adaptation is teacher dependant. In order to facilitate this, she suggests that more co-teachers are needed to successfully implement assessment adaptation to its full potential. Participants, on the other hand, felt that they needed more guidance and support from management to successfully implement assessment adaptations. According to the literature (Gous, 2009), the principal has a multi-faceted role as “leader, manager, enabler, organiser and administrator” (p. 11). It can be deduced thus that the implementation of assessment adaptation needs to be the collaborative responsibility of both the principal, support services and the teachers, pursuing a common goal.

The role of support services is crucial to the successful implementation of assessment adaptations. The school used for the study have a support team on the school premises that includes two Speech and Language Therapists, two Occupational Therapists, a Music Therapist, and a Learner Support teacher. For other services, learners are referred to professionals in private practice. From the findings, it was clear that the support team used an integrated model where the relevant specialists would work collaboratively. However, data from the focus group and questionnaire indicated that there is a lack of communication and support between participants and support services as teachers feel they need practical knowledge to assist the learners in the classroom and ultimately implement assessment adaptation. Support services offered at the school are mostly offered on a reactive basis and targeted at the needs of individual learners. Support specialists do not conduct proactive interventions to educate staff, children, and parents about barriers to learnings and the implementation of assessment adaptations to eliminate these barriers.

Parents play a vital role in communication between teachers and professionals in private practice. The participants of the focus group indicated that the involvement of parents is important as parents can serve as advocates for the child's needs at home and school. Unfortunately, parents can also have a negative impact on learners who experience barriers to learning as indicated by participants, as they feel parents do not necessarily trust the recommendations of teachers or other professionals. The SIAS document articulates that parents must be active participants in the assessment process. The policy states that parents need to take responsibility for the support of their children while articulating that parents must be partners in the implementation of Individualised Support Programmes (ISP) (DoBE, 2014, pp. 38-39).

In this theme, it became clear that there are several key players required to facilitate the successful implementation of assessment adaptation. It further shows that assessment adaptation is a complex concept, which requires substantial knowledge and collaboration to implement.

### **5.2.3 Teachers' knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation**

Participants presented a thorough understanding of the principles of inclusive education, barriers to learning and assessment adaptations. In the data collected, it was evidenced that teachers acknowledge the need for an inclusive education system and active measures to ensure that all learners are afforded a quality education.

The definitions provided for barriers to learning show that participants acknowledge the existence of a wide range of barriers. These include neurological, physical, emotional, academic, social, and economic barriers. This is particularly relevant in a South African context, where social and economic barriers play a significant role in education. With the study focusing on a private school, a criticism that is often levied in South Africa is that private schools do not serve the interests of a broader community as shown in Chapter 2. The school at which the study was conducted is in a suburb that houses mainly middle-class households. Families in the area are from various ethnicities and cultures. Within this community, the school strives to be able to fulfil the needs of all of learners, regardless of their ability or the barriers that they face. This is evidenced by the fact that several children

who experience severe learning impairments are still able to attend the school and receive a quality education.

Teachers articulated that practical knowledge of barriers to learning and assessment adaptation is critical to its' implementation. It was also noted that the participants all focused on resource allocation as a prerequisite to the implementation of assessment adaptation. Resources that were discussed included the availability of sufficient training and material, staff provisioning (focusing on the provisioning of support specialists as well as teacher assistants), an environment that is conducive to teaching and the use of a curriculum that promotes adaptation.

The acute awareness of the efficient allocation of resources was noteworthy. This is of relevance as private schools in South Africa are generally perceived to be well resourced compared to their public-school counterparts. According to the principal, the cost and benefit of resources were used as the primary considerations to decide resource allocation. This shows that the provision of support services at private schools not only benefits learners and teachers at these schools but also benefits administrators who must decide on curricula to be used in their schools. Participants focused on how the curriculum used within a school can either enable or restrict the practice of assessment adaptation. In general, private schools enjoy more freedom in their choice of a curriculum (as shown in Chapter 2). While this allows private schools to select curricula appropriate to their circumstances, it also articulates the need for private school administrators to select curricula that will enable their teachers to fulfil their duties. The school at which the study was conducted is still refining the curriculum they intend to use (although it has been agreed that the curriculum will need to be adherent to the provisions of CAPS). From the information obtained in the study, sufficient thought has not been given to the consideration that the curriculum to be implemented must contain guidelines for the identification of barriers to learning and the provision of support to limit these barriers through assessment adaptation.

All the factors listed above serve as enablers to the practice of assessment adaptation, however, it was emphasised that the provision of assessment adaptation is ultimately dependent on the teacher in the classroom. The participants in the study showed

substantial knowledge of assessment adaptation and its implementation but still expressed doubts in their knowledge and abilities.

#### **5.2.4 Teacher's attitudes toward assessment adaptations**

A teacher's attitude towards implementing assessment adaptations informally and formally has a significant impact on the success of assessment adaptation. The findings indicate that most of the participants felt they have successfully implemented assessment adaptation. According to the literature (Mahlo & Condry, 2016; Mahlo, 2016), if a teacher's attitude towards assessment adaptation is positive, the teacher will be more likely to implement assessment adaptation in the future.

In general, teachers in the study indicated that their experience of assessment adaptation was positive. It seemed as if participants were surprised by the outcome of assessment adaptation and found the results rewarding. Participants also seemed very flexible in their approach to assessment adaptations with a willingness to explore and experiment with various adaptations to find ideal solutions for learners.

On the other hand, some participants struggled to implement assessment adaptation. They felt that the school had not put adequate measures in place to help them to successfully implement inclusive education and in turn assessment adaptations. They are of the opinion that the school accommodated too wide a variety of learners with different needs, who therefore need more support and adaptation of curriculum and assessment. This situation leads to participants feeling demotivated and frustrated as they felt that the application of assessment adaptation without the necessary support was an overwhelming and daunting task.

Generally, teachers' attitudes indicate that they find the application of informal measures of assessment adaptation (a general adaptation of classroom practices) was more difficult than formal measures (in tests and exams). This is as they felt that they did not have time to give attention to all the learners, feeling that learners who do not have any barriers are at a disadvantage because teachers would prioritise the needs of learners who experience barriers. Additionally, the practice of informal assessment adaptation requires a constant and conscious effort, as all classroom activities need to be planned and executed while



keeping the principles of assessment adaptation in mind. This reiterates that the implementation of an inclusive education system places requires substantial effort from teachers, even in private schools which typically have lower student to teacher ratios and extensive resource availability when compared to public schools.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

The research has brought about many insights, as can be seen in the previous sections. Interpreting these insights has brought various implications to light, and from these, the following suggestions have been made to enhance the practice of assessment adaptations in the school:

Firstly, it was identified that teachers require further professional development pertaining to assessment adaptation. Teachers at the school expressed a need to obtain further knowledge on inclusive education, barriers to learning and assessment adaptations. This knowledge should focus on practical measures that teachers can employ in their classrooms. In general, teachers in the study presented with sound theoretical knowledge on these topics but felt that they lack practical knowledge. The knowledge presented to the teachers should be locally relevant, acknowledging the context in which the teachers operate. The transfer of knowledge can take on various forms, both formal and informal, but should ideally include active measures. This can include coaching and mentoring between peers, co-teaching practices or workshops in which practices are shared. Ideally, workshops would need to include practical components and the observation of teachers to enable a teach-and-learn methodology with feedback.

Secondly, it is recommended that teachers at the school are provided with guidelines to assist them to identify barriers to learning and appropriate assessment adaptations to limit these barriers. The knowledge that is imparted to teachers should include measures required to apply for and introduce formal assessment adaptations. Although the need for formal adaptations is limited in primary school (as the use of formal assessment instruments is limited in this phase), it is critical that measures to introduce these adaptations are introduced as early as possible. Applications for assessment adaptations require a documentary trail of measures taken to address barriers to learning that the learner experiences from early on and the effects of these measures and thus it is imperative that the necessary documentation is maintained from early on. In addition,

these guidelines should also provide clarity on internal policies employed by the school relating to the adaptation of assessment, the limitations of these adaptations and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Although the principal expressed that policies were in place, teachers were not aware of the existence of these policies.

Thirdly, it is suggested that the school reconsiders the resources it allocates in addressing barriers to learning. In terms of resourcing, the school has made a significant effort to ensure that teachers are provided with the necessary resources to enable them to support learners. However, it appears that the measures taken to address barriers to learning are still mostly reactive in nature. Taking a proactive approach might enable the school to extend the benefit of measures introduced to more learners. Currently, support staff at the school focus mainly on interventions required by individual learners. If this approach is reconsidered, in order to introduce a system where the main purpose of support staff is to impart knowledge to teachers and in order to enable teachers to employ the necessary practices, then the reach of these support services will be extended. Teachers also expressed the need for additional support staff in class (teacher assistants) to assist learners who experience barriers to learning.

Lastly, it is recommended that the curriculum employed in the school should be revised to ensure alignment between the curriculum and assessment practices. The curriculum used must allow enough flexibility to adapt to the needs of learners. In addition, reporting must be aligned with assessment practices.

The school at which the research was conducted was presented with a copy of this research paper. A primary goal of the research was to inform the drafting of a policy on inclusion for the school. The researcher is confident that the information articulated in this report will serve this purpose. The policy should ideally focus on the recommendations articulated above.

## **5.4 STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH**

This research project was done as a case study, using a questionnaire, focus groups and an interview. The various methods of data collection allowed the researcher to use triangulation as a method to verify findings. The use of a focus group allowed the

researcher to gather in-depth data on what the participants at this school experience. As participants discussed the research topic in an open forum, this method of data collection also enabled participants to construct meaning collectively. A qualitative interpretive paradigm was used to conduct the research, as this paradigm acknowledges the truth and the views various people hold of the world and recognises that these truths and views constantly change and evolve (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 175).

An additional strength that can be attributed to this research is that the findings thereof will be used to inform the drafting of a policy on inclusive education practices (as detailed in the suggestions above) to be implemented at the school where the research was conducted. Although the purpose of this study was not to derive universal knowledge, the insight derived could apply to other private schools in different settings.

As noted in Chapter 2, research on inclusive education practices in private schools is scarce. Research pertaining to assessment adaptation, particularly in a South African context is also limited. As such, this research project will add to the body of knowledge on both topics.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As the research focused on a single case study, data was obtained from a small sample group. Eleven participants (including the principal) decided to take part in the study. Although this allowed the researcher to formulate a rich description of the experiences of the participants, this could mean that the results obtained during this research may not be relevant under different circumstances. It should be noted that generalisation was, however, not the purpose of this research. The researcher took care to ensure that the findings presented reflected the realities of participants.

The school that was used for the case study opened its doors in 2019, as such the school is still in the process of formulating its policies and practices. It is therefore recognised that if the researcher chose to conduct the research at a school that has been open longer, different results might have been obtained, as a policy on assessment adaptation and inclusive education might already have been drafted. The school prides itself on being a mainstream private school with an inclusive pedagogy but has not yet concluded how this identity shapes the different systems and policies of the school.

## 5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study focused primarily on the experiences of teachers relating to assessment adaptation. Further studies into the experiences of other role players (principals, parents, learners, support service staff) relating to assessment adaptation in a private school setting could provide further insights to understand how assessment adaptation is conceptualised. The research project could also be expanded to include an action research component by introducing the recommendations proposed in this study and conducting an analysis of results obtained after these measures have been implemented.

The topics of inclusive education, barriers to learning and assessment are diverse and complex, hence there is a myriad of possibilities for related studies within these topics.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

This research study explored private primary school teachers' familiarity of assessment adaptations. The study was conducted as a single case study that was conducted at a private primary school in Cape Town. Using an interpretative paradigm, the researcher was able to explore the teachers' knowledge and experiences of assessment adaptation and related inclusive education practices and concepts.

Teachers in all settings have a responsibility to ensure that all learners that frequent their classrooms are afforded an opportunity to display their competencies. Assessment adaptation is a measure that can be implemented to ensure that this is done. Exploring the familiarity that teachers have of assessment adaptation has afforded me with an opportunity to delve into the understanding, attitudes, and perceptions of these teachers. It has provided me with a platform to critically reflect on the implementation of assessment adaptation and factors which influence it. Although the school has taken strides to ensure that it can serve the needs of all learners, regardless of their ability, there are still some steps which can be taken to ensure that this becomes a reality. "After climbing a great hill, one often finds that there are many more hills to climb" (Mandela, 2014).

Conducting this research has been a privilege and an experience. It is my wish that the study will lead to better outcomes for learners who experience barriers to learning, at this school and everywhere.

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# APPENDIX A:

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### APPROVED WITH STIPULATIONS

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

13 February 2020

Project number: REC-2019-11501

Project title: Exploring Private Primary school teachers' familiarity of assessment adaptation.

Dear Mrs Cecile-Dedri Mostert

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 2 December 2019 was reviewed by the REC: Humanities and approved with stipulations.

#### Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
13 February 2020	12 February 2023

#### PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STIPULATIONS:

The researcher may proceed with the envisaged research provided that the following stipulations, relevant to the approval of the project are adhered to or addressed:

##### 1. INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT PROCESSES AND FORMS

In Section 5.14.1, the principal investigator (PI) states “If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, he/she will be asked whether information obtained to that point may still be used in the research. If such consent is given, data gathered up and till that point will still be included, if not, all data will be disregarded”. The PI should acknowledge that it will not be possible to exclude collected data after completion of questionnaires and participation in focus group, because participation is anonymous. The PI has indicated that focus group and interview of the principal will be recorded but has not informed participants that the sessions will be audio recorded. [RESPONSE AND ACTION REQUIRED]

##### 2. INSTITUTIONAL AND EXTERNAL PERMISSIONS

2.1) The PI should remember to submit letters of permission when obtained. Data collection may only commence at sites where explicit permission has been obtained. [ACTION REQUIRED]

2.2) The researcher also requires permission from the Western Cape Department of Education for research to be conducted at schools in the district. Please contact Dr Audrey Wyngaard at the WCED to confirm. [RESPONSE AND ACTION REQUIRED]

#### HOW TO RESPOND:

Some of these stipulations may require your response. Where a response is required, you must respond to the REC within **three (3)** months of the date of this letter. Your provisional approval will be withdrawn automatically should your response not be received by the REC within 3 months of the date of this letter.

For instructions on how to respond to these stipulations, please download the FAQ on how to edit your application and follow the steps carefully: [HOW TO RESPOND TO REC FEEDBACK](#).

Where revision to supporting documents is required, please ensure that you replace all outdated documents on your application form with the revised versions.

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

**If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.**

Please use your SU project number (11501) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

#### **FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

#### **Included Documents:**

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Information sheet	Information sheet (1)	05/09/2019	2
Data collection tool	Interview guide (1)	05/09/2019	2
Data collection tool	Interview guide (1)	05/09/2019	2
Default	REC Letter	03/10/2019	
Data collection tool	Interview Guide Principal	27/10/2019	1
Request for permission	Consent letter school	27/10/2019	2
Default	DESC REC Response	28/10/2019	1
Research Protocol/Proposal	Chapter 1 30 Oct	11/11/2019	4
Default	DESC REC Response 3	11/11/2019	2
Informed Consent Form	Consent Questionnaire	27/11/2019	1
Informed Consent Form	Consent Focus Group	27/11/2019	1
Data collection tool	Description	27/11/2019	2
Informed Consent Form	Consent Principal	27/11/2019	2
Default	Response letter 28 November	27/11/2019	1

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at [cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za).

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.*

*The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

## **APPENDIX B:**

# **PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



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**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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Dear Potential Participant

My name is Dedri Mostert, a student at the Educational Psychology department of Stellenbosch University and I am currently undertaking a research project in order to complete my MEd Educational Psychology degree.

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate. If you decide not to participate in this study, this will not affect you negatively in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you initially agree to take part. You will not be penalised for doing so.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers in private schools in implementing assessment adaptations. I hope that you will share your insights into the knowledge that you have about assessment adaptations, your ability to implement such adaptations and your experiences in doing so. Data will be collected using a focus group discussion. The discussion will take approximately 45 minutes to complete and will explore your experiences and perceptions of assessment adaptation.

#### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:**

You have the right to decline answering any questions and you can exit the discussion at any time without giving a reason. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research

participant, contact Mrs Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

The views that you share during the focus group discussion will be protected by ensuring that all information recorded is kept anonymous. Any references made regarding a single participant will be made using pseudonyms, while care will be taken not to reveal identities of participants by means of disclosing characteristics that are unique to the participant.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Dedri Mostert 074 264 5893 and/or the Supervisor, Dr L Dreyer on 021 808 3502. By ticking the boxes below, you express your consent to participate in the study.

<b>I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided for the current study.</b>	YES	NO
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I agree to take part in this focus group discussion.</b>	YES	NO
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX C:**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### *Private Primary School teacher's familiarity of assessment adaptation*

Interview guide for semi-structured interviews: participants and Principal

1. Define inclusive education.
2. Describe your understanding of barriers to learning.
3. Define barriers to assessment.
4. Are you aware of different types of barriers to learning/assessment?
  - i. If yes, please name them.
  - ii. If no, researcher can explain.
5. What experiences have you had in teaching learners that experience barriers?
6. Accommodation of learners with learning barriers.
7. Exploring the term assessment adaptation.
8. Are there different types of assessment adaptation? What types?
9. Process followed to allocate assessment adaptations.
10. Is there a formal policy (formulated by the school or regulating bodies) that informs assessment adaptations?
11. Implementation and administration of assessment adaptations.
12. Have you successfully applied assessment adaptation in your classroom? Do you feel comfortable to do so?

## **APPENDIX D:**

### **GOOGLE FORM QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Male/Female
2. Age
  - i. 20-25 years
  - ii. 25-30 years
  - iii. 30-35 years
  - iv. 35-40 years
  - v. 40-45 years
  - vi. 45-50 years
  - vii. 50-55 years
  - viii. 55-60 years
3. Teaching experience
  - i. 0-5 years
  - ii. 5-10 years
  - iii. 10-15 years
  - iv. 15-20 years
  - v. 20-25 years
4. What qualification(s) do you hold?
5. What grades do you teach?
  - i. Gr. 000 – 0
  - ii. Gr. 1 – 3
  - iii. Gr. 4 – 7
6. What do you understand under the term Inclusive Education?
7. What are barriers to learning/ barriers to assessment?
8. Is assessment necessary?
9. What is the goal of assessment?
10. Have you ever heard of assessment adaptation?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
11. Have you applied assessment adaptation in your classroom?



## APPENDIX E:

### PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTION

Example of transcription of focus group 1 discussion with coding according to themes:

P3	My understanding is that a child does not have a barrier to learning, that the environment around them creates barriers. If a child is in a wheelchair the school should be providing wheelchair access. If they don't then the child now has a barrier but it is not from the child's side it is from the school environment side because the school should have facilities available for that child, so it is all about the environment and the teacher adapting what they do to accommodate children with a special need.	Barriers to learning  Inclusive education
Interviewer	Ok. Thank you very much. Is there anyone that would like to add to that?	
P4	I will go. I think it is also important to mention because we are in South Africa that inclusive education also affords children the opportunity with whatever background, religion or race and to be included and not be prejudiced against that, especially considering that we have people from all of walks of life and religion and cultures in South Africa, so for me, that is also really important instead of just actual physical barriers to learning.	Inclusive education
Interviewer	Thank you, thank you for that.	
P5	Can I jump in there as well? I totally agree with that. It is about having access to education no matter if there is a boundary or not, whatever barrier you might have it might not be a physical or known academic boundary or barrier.	Inclusive education  Barriers to learning
Interviewer	Thanks, P5. Anyone else?	
P6	I feel that an access to education is very relevant, but it is tough as a teacher to be able to provide that for the children. It is one thing for them to have a physical disability and to be able to provide them with a space and the ability to get in and out of the classroom, but when it comes to a mental disability then I find it more tricky to be able to create that inclusive space and to be able to teach in all the different ways for all the different children who are needing different versions of the	Experience of adaptation

	material in order to access it for themselves properly.	
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P3	I will jump in. While bringing that up I also find that obviously all schools are supposed to be inclusive but I also feel when we are bringing up mental disabilities and things like that, and emotional issues, I feel it is important that we also talk about the teacher who has to teach these children. Are teachers prepared for inclusive education, are teachers qualified for inclusive education, are teachers given professional development around it, because it is all good and well to say we need to take all these children in, and we need to accommodate them, but how much training, to be fair, are all teachers getting, to assist these children? Because obviously our goal and our aim are to deal with it is give as much individualized training. I just wanted to provide children with individualized learning if necessary, but how much are we training teachers to deal with that? I just want to add that in as well.	<p>Role of the teacher</p> <p>Requirements to implement assessment adaptation</p>
P7	If I can add on to what P3 is saying and I am speaking from personal experience. I think that with dealing with all the barriers, personally, I am struggling with that. Making sure that the kids who do not have barriers are also getting my attention. As at the moment, I am not struggling, but it is something that is on my mind constantly is to make sure that you are giving all the attention to those who need the extra attention, let's not forget about those who kind of keep on going because they are capable too, they also deserve your attention.	<p>Experience of adaptation</p> <p>Role of the teacher</p> <p>Experience of adaptation</p>

P2	A lot of schools want to be inclusive schools but you also need to have the support system available so it might not just be in the classroom with facilitators and whatever but there actually needs to be on campus support systems like therapists, nurses, whatever you need, whatever the child needs if you are going to be a proper inclusive school you need to have that available on campus.	<p>Requirements to implement assessment adaptation</p> <p>Role of the principal</p>
Interviewer	100% that is a very valuable point Des, thank you for making that.	
P5	Jumping in on what P7 said, every child has a right to learn so that is always a big thing for me. If you are taking in a child with such a massive barrier, that it stops other children from learning as well, that is a problem to me.	<p>Inclusive education</p> <p>Experience of adaptation</p>
Interviewer	Yes, I agree with you P5, thank you for saying that. Thanks.	

P6	I think it is important that we take note of the number of children that have got barriers to learning and we have people like facilitators inside our classrooms to help us, because to manage the whole group and all the different little things that are going on, on our own, as a teacher, is incredibly difficult.	Experience of adaptation
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Example of transcription of focus group 2 discussion with coding according to themes:

P10	Like right now? It all depends, I feel like this is a little bit of a buzz word in society at the moment, and I feel like as teachers, inclusive education at most schools allows everyone with any kind of difference in their understanding or in how their brain works, but personally, I don't think that is being very inclusive at all, because we are not really putting the parameters in place that help these kind of children, so I feel like the school systems are saying inclusive education - everyone should be enrolled and then we enrol children in mainstream schools, that are not really able to cope, then without really putting the things in place that we are really able to help them, so currently it is a bit of a buzz word which is being utilized properly.	Defining inclusive education Experience of adaptation  Experience of adaptation
P8	For me, inclusive education, like P10, says, is a buzz word for getting people to feel that everybody is included, all the special needs and neuro diversities and all of that, however not taking into consideration that the teachers in the classrooms are not trained for inclusive education. They are trained as general mainstream teachers, who are now being forced, not that they are not unwilling, but they feel ill equipped, to embrace and to assist children who have a huge range of needs and that is not really realistic and now what is happening, is you are disadvantaging the mainstream child or you are disadvantaging the child with the neurodiversity because we don't have the skills to cope with them, not every teacher is trained for remedial, and we should be if we are going to be main schooling everyone.	Requirements to implement assessment adaptation Role of the teacher  Experience of adaptation
Interviewer	Thanks, P8.	
P9	I think both P10 and P8 have hit the nail on the head in what people think inclusive education is. I have worked at a remedial school so working with 12 kids in a classroom that have all got educational difficulties, is a very different scenario than if you are in a class with kids who are mainstream and kids that have challenges. What I find now, especially working at the school I am at, a lot of us have got quite a number of kids with challenges and like	Role of the teacher

	<p>you guys said, we are not equipped. I have the experience, I have worked in a remedial school, so I have a little more experience, but it does not mean I am equipped for it. I am equipped working in a remedial class with a small bunch of kids with challenges, but I am not equipped for a class with mainstream kids with challenges, so what ends up happening is we are stressed because we want to help the kids who are struggling but we also what to challenge the kids who are needing extension and need that extra and what ends up happening is we don't do that. The kids with challenges take up more time than the administrators and the managers of the school think they do or expect that they do.</p>	<p>Experience of adaptation</p>
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Interviewer	Thank you for that. Alrighty, could anyone please define barriers to assessment for me, please?	
P10	<p>I actually struggled to answer this question on your questionnaire. I think for me personally one of my biggest barriers to assessment, and it is actually something that has been coming up at school, is that our assessment criteria and the curriculum that we are teaching are not aligned. For example, we are teaching a Singapore curriculum but we are assessing according to CAPS, and now what I am struggling with is, am I assessing learners according to the spiral curriculum, that is CAPS, or am I meant to assess them on mastery, which is the way the Singapore curriculum runs? And if we were to assess properly it would be according to mastery but then what is going to come across negatively as a school, is either we are not hitting our targets correctly, or some children take longer to master than others, so there is a very fine line between are we helping our kids really understand or are we creating an assessment that shows we are covering everything and they are all getting there at a similar time, it was a difficult question to answer, but for me, one of my biggest barriers to assessment is what do you want? Do you want to know what the kids are actually able to do? Or when I give you these marks are you going to assess me, that I am actually doing poorly because all my kids are getting 4's? That would be my biggest barrier, are you assessing me, or do you want me to give you a proper account of what the kid can do? Because by the end of the year they will get there, but I think everything is so inflated because if you give your child a 3 or 4 out of 7 it is probably going to be adjusted or it is going to be seen as a poor reflection on you as a teacher.</p>	<p>Requirements to implement assessment adaptation</p> <p>Experience of adaptation</p> <p>Defining barriers to assessment</p>

P8	<p>For me barriers to assessment, I have two thoughts on that, is attitudes and then expectations. There is a huge negative attitude towards being assessed, which is completely unnecessary, it doesn't need to be seen as a negative thing, it is just checking where you are at, but there is this whole social negative anxiety when you hear the word assessments like you are either going to fail or you are not, but it is not about that, but that is a whole social construct, and I don't know if we can change that in one decade, that is going to take so much longer, but when it comes to expectations, I think a big problem specifically when it comes to inclusive education is the fact you have to differentiate. Now I worked at a school that was really big on this differentiation so the spelling and the Math, you had to prove that you differentiate your lessons and you had to assess them differentiated as well, however, the report was not differentiated. So now I am assessing Group A on a lower level, let's say on a Grade 3 level, Group B Grade 4, Group C Grade 5, but it is a Grade 4 class, so they get three different assessments based on three different levels, however, the report is Grade 4, so obviously the last group will get 7's all the way, the middle group they will get a varied amount because it is a pitched assessment, and the lower group will pass but the assessment criteria is actually different, but everyone is getting 80's because you got a Grade 3 assessment, you got a Grade 4 and you got a Grade 5. The expectations are the same. So, for those reports for that school, it was a big problem, because the expectation to perform was different per group, but they are all getting the same stamp of approval, but they have not all passed Grade 4. That group passed Grade 3, not Grade 4 but the report says they passed Grade 4. That is a problem, so if there is going to be differentiated learning, there has to be differentiated reporting as well.</p>	<p>Defining barriers to assessment</p> <p>Experience of adaptation</p> <p>Requirements to implement assessment adaptation</p>
P9	<p>Well, I think marks are a barrier to assessment, I don't think we should in Primary school, be giving marks at all, of course, we've got to have an outline of what the kids need to do be able to do by the end of the year, or by each term so you have your yearly operative, then you do it by term and then you do it by week. So you plan what you want them to achieve by the end of the year already, and then that is what you teach from, but you are not assessing in the way of tests, you are assessing in the way of when you are sitting with a focus group for Maths, for example, you are writing in a book, and saying ok she is managing, she is struggling with number sense, this one can do this, I need to work on that with this one, so it does seem a bit idealistic, but it does give a better idea of each child and what they are achieving and what they are able to do, so having to give them a test, where they are all writing the same test, or as P8 said with the differentiated assessment, there is still a finite piece of paper that you give each kid, and if the kid is really anxious that day, or having a bad day, or his mom shouted at him in the morning on the way to school, those kids biggest barrier.</p>	<p>Defining barriers to assessment</p> <p>Defining assessment adaptation</p> <p>Defining barriers to learning</p>

## **APPENDIX F:**

### **PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIPTION**

Example of transcription of principal interview:

Interviewer: Please explain to me how your assessment works?

Principal: It is called authentic assessment, it is continuous, it is accurate because it is an accurate or true reflection of the child's ability in the terms of mastering of knowledge and skills and it is obviously used in a diagnostic form to inform the adaptation of the program according to the needs that weren't necessarily met. And that is what I believe assessment should be about. I understand that it is also a benchmarking tool and for standardization purposes for the Department etc. and those are necessities that need to be achieved and I understand that. But for me it is a learning tool, because it goes back to the growth mindset premise i.e. a child hasn't required a skill or knowledge yet, they will and based on that I think it is a really critical tool for learning. I think it is often, misunderstood and that is why when teachers give exams or tests or assessments and they give it back with marks on it and they don't review it they don't look at it in terms of how we can learn from it. That to me, to a larger extent, is a redundant exercise. What we do with a lot of the children, we do not put the marks on. With being an authentic assessment mode, and not calling it a test, you are taking away the anxiety. Research shows that anxiety effects performance and so it is not an accurate reflection of a child but by taking that and renaming or rewording it I think that is also assists quite a lot. Of course, we introduce formal exams in Grade 7, and this is our first year of that, that is going to be an interesting exercise and we are doing that to prepare them for High School. Because what is the goal of the different phases to prepare the children for the next phase? And

ultimately to prepare them for the world of work. So therefore, that reality exists in the world, so it is upon us to do it.

Interviewer: Can you please explain to me your thoughts and your understanding of assessment adaptations?

Principal: To me that is concessions. Even with the ongoing assessments that takes place in the true sense of the word, it should be those that need the accommodation that should be facilitated either in terms of a reader/scribe or the type concessions etc. that need to be put in place to be completely accurate, as to just a formal examination. Of course, there is a cost implication always for that, so that does not happen.

Interview: While assessing in the senior phases, does assessment adaptation happen during the informal assessments too?

Principal: That is what I am saying, it should, it does not but it should. That cost needs to be paid by the parents and whilst we are a private school, we have parents that both work. So, I do not believe it is an affluent body, in Utopia the school should provide it. That would be the best idea. I think that one can do that when you grow your integrated therapy team, or when you use a learnership program and what you could do is to train. So ultimately you can head in that direction, so I do think that is where you need to go but currently, we do not have that in place. We will put it in place with exams obviously, there will be certain children that will need that.

Interviewer: What do you have in place to determine if a child needs an assessment adaptation?

Principal: We have a referral policy in place which is headed up by our Senior Associate Head who liaises with individual teachers. She is actively doing that now, and then the therapists also liaise with the teachers. Those

accommodations that need to take place, she will make an application to the department etc. for that. It is a formal process to do that.

Interviewer: Tell me about the policies and documentations. You just told me about the referral policy, but is there any official policy the school has for assessment adaptations?

Principal: One nuance it in the referral policy but there is not a separate policy for it.

Interviewer: Are you the using the government's one as a guideline?

Principal: Yes of course.

Interviewer: Are there organisations you use to help set up the assessments?

Principal: Yes, there is the National Curriculum, so for assessment generally, we follow National Protocol for assessment and we adapt it. And then, in regard to subject progressive requirements, we follow the national policy pertaining to the promotion and the progression of students' requirements, so that informs it in terms of the percentages etc. Often what private schools do is they increase their percentage so that they have a higher held in their eyes. We are conforming to the current National Curriculum requirements in terms of that.



## **APPENDIX G:**

### **CODING AND THEMES**

#### Theme 1: Assessment adaptation

3. Defining assessment adaptation
4. Barriers to assessment/ assessment adaptation

#### Theme 2: Implementation of assessment adaptation

5. Role of the teachers
6. Role of the Principal
7. Role of support services
8. Role of the parent

#### Theme 3: Teacher's knowledge and implementation of assessment adaptation

4. Defining inclusive education
5. Barriers to learning
6. Requirements to implement inclusive education & assessment adaptation

#### Theme 4: Teacher's attitudes toward assessment adaptation

4. Experiences of assessment adaptation
5. Provision of support
6. School's expectations from teachers